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Patients Travelling Abroad - Prescriptions & Advice

Prescriptions for patients travelling out of the country

By law, the NHS ceases to have responsibility for the medical care of patients when they leave the UK. People traveling within Europe are advised to carry an authorised European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) at all times and this gives entitlement to reduced cost (and sometimes free) medical treatment. Patients should be advised to check specific entitlements prior to travel.

- | For patients who will be out of the country for less than 3 months, it is reasonable to provide sufficient medicines for an existing condition (i.e. asthma, diabetes)
- | For patients leaving the country for more than 3 months, they should be advised to register with a local doctor for their continuing medical needs. It is reasonable for GPs to provide sufficient medication to give patients time to do this.

GPs are not required by their Terms of Service to provide prescriptions for the treatment of a condition that is not present and may arise while the patient is abroad. Persons who have left the UK, or who are intending to leave the UK, for more than 3 months are not normally allowed to continue to be registered with a practice.

The NHS accepts responsibility for supplying ongoing medication for temporary periods abroad of up to 3 months. If a person is going to be abroad for more than three months then all that the patient is entitled to at NHS expense is a sufficient supply of his/her regular medication in order to get to their destination, where they should then find an alternative supply of that medication.

As GPs you do need to be aware of your responsibilities in signing FP10's for patients' travelling abroad, i.e. the resultant monitoring and treatment of the patient's condition and any adverse effects of doing so.

You may be committing fraud in prescribing to patients that are leaving the UK - please note this information carefully.

Advice for patients whilst abroad

Patients travelling abroad may contact their practice for a variety of reasons. This may include:

- | Urgent request for medical records/history due to emergency
- | Illness while abroad
- | Admin reasons (eg request for appointment or repeat prescription for when they return)

Any requests for information from the medical records should be handled in accordance with

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If a patient cannot consent then the GP may have to decide if they feel that the transfer of information is in the patient's best interest.

There is no reason why a practice can't deal with administrative requests such as repeat prescription ordering or appointment booking pending the patient's return home.

Where a patient is requesting medical advice while abroad it is very important that clinicians are aware of the risks associated with giving such advice.

As well as the difficulties of adequately assessing the patient in order to make a proper diagnosis, it is likely that the clinician would not be covered in terms of medical indemnity if action was taken against them in another country where harm had arisen as a result of their provision of advice.

Because of this, we would advise clinicians not to offer any medical advice to a patient who is overseas. They should instead be encouraged to seek local medical advice in the country in which they are travelling.

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