

# Safety

## Controlled Drug Incidents

### Liaison with Community Pharmacy essential when initiating post-dated prescriptions

Recently, two incidents have been reported to the NHS England CD Accountable Officer that upon investigation and discussion have similar root causes.

On both occasions the patient attended a community pharmacy reporting that they had run out of their pain killers and needed more. Unfortunately, on neither occasion did the pharmacist notice that they were making the supply against a post-dated prescription. It would appear that although regular patients, the pharmacists were not aware that the decision had been made to limit the patient's access to opioid analgesics. Indeed, their own investigations into the resulting CD incident came to the conclusion that the date on the script was a mistake.

When a prescriber believes that a patient's opioid use has become problematic (or any other medication with addictive potential e.g. benzodiazepines, pregabalin), and makes the decision to limit supply by issuing post-dated scripts, it is important that the dispensing contractor is made aware. The patient should be counselled to understand that sharing this information is essential to their care. Both teams of health care professionals can then support the patient to manage their misuse of medicines, and neither team is at risk of being caught on the hop or blackmailed into making an inappropriate or illegal supply to the patient.

### Buprenorphine: CAUTION strength of sublingual preparations prescribed

Buprenorphine sublingual preparations are licensed for two indications:

- As a strong analgesic for the relief of moderate to severe pain (200microgram, 400microgram).
- Substitution treatment for opioid drug dependence, within a framework of medical, social and psychological treatment (400microgram, 2mg, 8mg).

The conversion ratio of sublingual buprenorphine to oral morphine is 80.

A 200microgram sublingual buprenorphine dose is roughly equivalent to 16mg of oral morphine.

**A 2mg dose is roughly equivalent to 160mg of oral morphine.**

The risk of selecting the wrong product or misapprehension of the potency of buprenorphine could have catastrophic consequences.

### Buprenorphine Oral Lyophilisate Products

Lyophilisate products, marketed as Espranor®, must not be confused with sublingual preparations. Espranor® is **not interchangeable with other buprenorphine products.** Different buprenorphine products have different bioavailability.

Espranor® has been locally classified as **NOT RECOMMENDED.**

