

CONTROLLED DRUGS NEWSLETTER



NHS ENGLAND SOUTH WEST (SOUTH)

January 2019

GABAPENTIN AND PREGABALIN WILL BE SCHEDULED AS CONTROLLED DRUGS FROM APRIL 2019

These changes will introduce various new controls that aim to mitigate the risks of illicit use, inappropriate prescribing, and diversion

The Home Office has drafted [amendments](#) to the Misuse of Drugs Regulations that will make gabapentin and pregabalin schedule 3 Controlled Drugs from 1 April 2019. The drugs will be exempt from *safe custody*, so don't need to be in a CD cabinet.

This change to the regulations affects legitimate *medical* use of the drugs, and the effects of these changes are that:

1. Prescription writing requirements apply:
 - a. The dose must be clearly defined – i.e. a dose of 'to be taken as directed' would no longer be legal
 - b. The formulation (i.e. capsules) must be stated
 - c. The strength must be stated in addition to the dose
 - d. The total quantity must be stated in words & figures
 - e. The maximum quantity prescribed should not exceed thirty days supply
2. Prescriptions will be legally valid for 28 days only
3. Repeat dispensing and electronic repeat dispensing (eRD) will NOT be possible. Any existing prescriptions will be invalid from 1 April
4. Electronic prescribing will be legal, but will likely not be possible on your clinical system initially

Your clinical system will ensure much of this is the case with computer generated prescriptions, but take extra care with any handwritten prescriptions.

Links:

Public Health England (2014)
[Advice for prescribers on the risk of the misuse of pregabalin and gabapentin](#)

The Telegraph (2015)
[New warning over abuse of prescription drugs](#)

BBC Radio 4 (2015)
[Inside Health: pregabalin and gabapentin misuse](#)

University of Oxford (2017)
[Prescribing of pregabalin by all CCGs](#)

British Medical Journal (2017)
[Misuse of gabapentin and pregabalin is potentially being underestimated](#)

FRANK (2017)
[Gabapentin](#) and [Pregabalin](#)

Plymouth Herald (2017)
[Family pays tribute to 'gentle giant' Glyn after fatal overdose](#)

Other effects of the changes:

- Proof of identity can be requested from those collecting medication, and may be insisted upon
- Community pharmacists will not be able to make emergency supplies either at the request of a patient or a doctor, whether NHS or private (NB: this includes faxed prescriptions, against which supplies cannot be made)
- Only private prescriptions issued by a prescriber with a UK address will be legal, and will need to be issued on form FP10PCD bearing an NHS England-issued unique CD PIN
- Prescriptions from EEA and Swiss prescribers will not be valid for dispensing in the UK
- Wholesale supplies will need to be requisitioned using the mandatory FP10CDF form
- Possession of stock will likely require a Home Office license and wholesale supply almost certainly will

The Home Office has also drafted amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act that will make gabapentin and pregabalin Class C drugs. This change affects *illicit* use of the drugs.

The classification of a drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act relates to the penalties for illicit use. Patients and members of the public should note that unlawful possession or supply of a Class C drug is an offence that will result in a greater penalty than for a normal prescription-only medicine. Therefore, selling or supplying these drugs to others is a criminal offence with criminal consequences.

Links:

Pfizer Ltd. (2017)
[Summary of product characteristics - Lyrica](#)

University of Bristol (2017)
[Combining heroin and commonly prescribed non-opioid pain killers leads to a significant rise in overdose deaths](#)

The Guardian (2017)
[Pregabalin, known as 'new valium', to be made class C drug after deaths](#)

Devon Live (2017)
[In the grip of a drugs crisis](#)

BBC Three (2017)
[Belfast's pregabalin addiction](#)

NHS Dorset CCG (2017)
[Prescribing advice for pregabalin](#)

Office for National Statistics (2017)
[Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2016 registrations](#)

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