

**Prescribing and Medicines
Management Team**

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Medicines prescribed as 'Specials'

Dear Doctor,

The medicines management team began the '*Specials*' (unlicensed medication) campaign in June 2010. Each month specials (unlicensed) prescribing data is sent to practice based pharmacists for review and discussion within their individual practices. Whilst, approx £800,000 was spent on specials during the financial year 2010-2011, it is evident from prescribing data that the spend has not escalated at the rate seen in previous years. This is testament to the hard work and enthusiasm of members of the practice based pharmacist team and individual prescribers and practices in reviewing their own prescribing practice. This has led to an improved understanding of and recognising when costly specials are prescribed on in-house clinical systems.

The most recent phase of the campaign is to collaborate with the Dudley Local Pharmaceutical Committee (which represents the local pharmacy contractors) to ensure that all pharmacy contractors are aware of the need to procure specials cost-effectively to provide good value for money for the NHS. Dudley LPC have been very supportive of the medicines management message regarding specials medication and as a result of our joint working, the medicines management team produced a "specials" community pharmacist "Tablet" newsletter which was submitted to the LPC together with evidence of local prescribing data for specials (demonstrating a wide range of costs for individual identical items).

It was agreed that LPC would write a letter to all Dudley Pharmacy contractors highlighting the need to procure specials responsibly. This communication would include the newsletter and anonymised data amongst contractors to highlight the wide variation in costs being seen. The letter from the LPC to contractors and the "Tablet" specials community pharmacy newsletter are attached for your information.

We will continue to supply 'specials' prescribing data to your Practice Based Pharmacist who can assist you with their review and await with interest the impact the introduction in November of a tariff price for 60 of the more commonly prescribed specials.

If you have any further queries please direct to a member of the Prescribing and Medicines Management team.

Yours sincerely,

Noel Aslett
Prescribing Adviser