

PRESCRIBING MEDICATIONS FOR PATIENTS TRAVELLING ABROAD

▪ NHS COMMISSIONING – What does the GP contract say?

13.14. Removals from the list of patients absent from the United Kingdom etc.

13.14.1. The Board shall remove a patient from the Contractor's list of patients where it receives notification that that patient-

(a) **intends to be away from the United Kingdom for a period of at least three months;**

(b) is in the armed forces of the Crown (except in the case of a patient to whom clause 13.5A applies; (c) is serving a prison sentence of more than two years or sentences totalling in the aggregate more than that period;

(d) **has been absent from the United Kingdom for a period of more than three months;** or

(e) has died.

Refer to: <http://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/2015/06/gms-2015-16.pdf>

▪ GP LAW FURTHER EXPLAINS:

"NHS England had a duty (i.e. there is no discretion) to remove any patient from the list of a practice if they are informed that the patient has *"been absent from the United Kingdom for a period of more than three months"*. Unlike the situation where a patient has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment or joined HM Forces, a person who is absent from the United Kingdom for a period of more than three months is not necessarily being provided with NHS funded GP services by another route. **The GP practice therefore has to exercise a degree of judgment in deciding whether to apply to NHS England to remove such a patient from the list. The test for the practice ought to be this person has retained a sufficient connection to the UK to continue to be habitually resident here and thus can justify remaining on the practice list.** Hence, for example, it would plainly be inappropriate to apply to remove an elderly person from the practice list who spends 3 months across the winter in Spain but 9 months of the year in the UK. Equally a patient whose family comes from the Indian sub-continent who travels to, for example, Bangladesh for an extended visit of 4 months plainly should not be removed. But a GP practice ought not to be paid for someone who has substantially moved to another country".

Refer to: <http://www.gplaw.co.uk/chapter-6-management-of-the-practice-list-of-patients>

▪ NHS CHOICES

Provides information for [patients taking medicines abroad](#):

A GP should consider the following when a patient requests medication to take abroad:

- ❖ Type of medication, requirement for monitoring/blood tests and duration of the holiday.
- ❖ Medical risk to patient for not prescribing the medication.
- ❖ Duration of the prescription should be dependent on the GPs clinical judgement and medicine regulations (see controlled drugs)

If the patient is travelling to Europe, the patient can take out a EHIC (European Health Insurance Card) which will enable the patient to access state-provided healthcare in European Economic Area (EEA) countries, including Switzerland, at a reduced cost, or sometimes for free. The card **is not** an alternative to travel insurance. Therefore, it is important to have both an EHIC and a valid private travel insurance policy. More information can be found at:

<http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Pages/about-the-ehic.aspx>

CHECKING WHAT'S ALLOWED:

The patient should also be advised to check the rules for all the countries they are going to, including countries that they are just passing through. Different countries have different rules and regulations about:

- the types of medicine they allow to be taken into the country
- the maximum quantity you can take in

Other countries may have their own import regulations for controlled drugs and prescription medicines. We strongly advise you to check this with the UK-based representatives of the country or countries that you are travelling to or through. Please find a list of contacts for [Embassies, Consulates and High Commissions](#).

It is a good idea for patients to travel with a copy of their prescription and a letter from their GP giving details of their medication and the name of the health condition for which they need the medication. It may also be worthwhile for the patient to have their prescription translated into the language of the country or countries that they are visiting.

For longer visits abroad, the patient should be advised to register with a local doctor for continuing medication; this may need to be paid for by the patient. It is wise for the patient to check with the manufacturer that medicines required are available in the country being visited.

PROPHYLACTIC MEDICINES (including malaria)

- ❖ Patients should be given private prescriptions when they require medication in their possession solely in anticipation of an ailment whilst they are outside of the UK but for which they do not require treatment when the medicine is prescribed e.g. travel sickness/diarrhoea.
- ❖ Patients should be advised to purchase these items such as travel sickness locally (prior to travel); advice is available from community pharmacists if required. For conditions unresponsive to self-medication, the patient should normally seek medical attention abroad.
- ❖ Prescription only medicines will need a private prescription; this may be charged for at the GP's discretion.

CONTROLLED DRUGS (CD)

There is a good practice requirement that the quantity of Schedule 2, 3 and 4 Controlled Drugs be limited to a quantity for up to 30 days treatment. In cases where the prescriber believes that a prescription should be issued for a longer period he may do so but will need to be able to justify that there is a clinical need and that it would not cause an unacceptable risk to patient safety. (<http://psnc.org.uk/dispensing-supply/dispensing-controlled-drugs/controlled-drug-prescription-forms-validity/>)

Travellers who are carrying 3 or more calendar month's supply of controlled drugs from the UK or into the UK for their own personal use will need a personal licence (applications should be submitted at least 10 working days before the travel date) – refer to criteria

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130128103514/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/drugs/licensing/personal/>

The most commonly used drugs and the Schedules to The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 they are listed under can be found at the [controlled drugs list](#). Please note this list is not exhaustive. If the controlled drug you wish to travel with is not listed, please contact the Drugs Licensing & Compliance Unit for advice.

If carrying prescribed drugs listed under Schedule 5 to The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, a personal import or export licence will not be needed to enter or leave the United Kingdom. However, in either case the home office advise travellers to obtain a letter from their prescribing doctor or drug worker, which should confirm your name, travel itinerary, names of prescribed controlled drugs, dosages and total amounts of each to be carried.

Specialist Drugs

In addition to the points above, please consider prior to travel:

- ✚ The safe storage of the medication during transport including temperature control and restrictions for luggage on the plane.
- ✚ These drugs require Specialist prescribing and monitoring during treatment therefore appropriate clinical expertise should be arranged abroad for the duration of the stay.
- ✚ Patient must ensure insurance is in place should the medication be lost, damaged or incorrectly stored.
- ✚ There are adequate arrangements for safe disposal of medication and sundries

INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

- Health professionals are advised to source up to date information from the National Travel Health Network and Centre website www.nathnac.org is a Department of Health funded service.
- General information on immunisation, vaccine safety and information on individual diseases and vaccination is available in "The Green Book" at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book>
- MIMS provides information on malaria prophylaxis and immunisations on a country by country basis at <http://www.mims.co.uk/> free registration is required.
- MASTA provides information on preventing illness or injury while travelling including specific disease information and facts (aimed at patients). There is a charge to register. <http://www.masta-travel-health.com/>