

17 October 1960.

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER NO. 17

TO ALL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS:

(Copy for information to chemists.)

Dear Sir/Madam,

AMENDMENT TO THE DRUG TARIFF

Enclosed is a copy of Amendment No. 1 to the Drug Tariff 1960. Important points are:

1. *Addition of Antidepressive Drugs*

Imipramine hydrochloride (Toframil), Isocarboxazid (Implan), and Phenelzine dihydrogen sulphate (Nardil) will be available on prescription through any hospital dispensary from 1 November. No further special approvals under section 101 will therefore be issued. Therapeutic Notes No. 24 (herewith) discuss the use of these preparations.

2. *Hypotensive Agents Available Through Chemists*

All drugs for the treatment of hypertension at present in the Drug Tariff will be available through chemists from 1 November.

Supplementary Benefits - Section 101

If a patient requires a drug which is not normally a charge on the Fund, and cannot reasonably be expected to pay for it, application may be made by the practitioner to the Director of this Division for approval of a special supply.

A brief statement of the facts, with a prescription, should be forwarded. The prescription will be returned to the prescriber or patient with a special endorsement, authorising a free supply. This provision does not include drugs which are normally available only through hospital boards.

In future, prescriptions under section 101 will normally be supplied only through hospital board dispensaries.

P.T.O.

Griseofulvin (Fulcin, Grisovin)

Griseofulvin has been requested by some practitioners for conditions where its use is unjustified. Although effective in linea of the scalp, griseofulvin does not shorten the duration of treatment appreciably, and the high cost is not warranted. Orthodox treatment usually requires three or four months to be effective, but if results by this means are not satisfactory after five to six months, griseofulvin may be indicated. It is useful in *T. rubrum*, but usually long-term treatment is indicated, especially if nails are involved, and the ultimate cost may be as much as £400. It is advisable to have a dermatologist's opinion and to get scrapings and cultures done before commencing treatment.

Corticosteroids

Hospital special committees ("cortisone committees") have been concerned recently regarding requests from practitioners for the more expensive corticosteroids for their patients. Only in very occasional cases, where other preparations have proved ineffective, are these newer preparations warranted.

Comparative costs to hospital boards of these drugs, at roughly equivalent dosages, are approximately as follows:

Prednisolone 5 mg	Up to £5 10s. per 1,000.
Methylprednisolone 4 mg (Medrol)	Up to £76 10s. per 1,000.
Hydrocortisone 4 mg (Solu-Cort)	Up to £68 per 1,000.
Dexamethasone 8 mg	Up to £70 per 1,000.

These costs vary according to the quantities purchased. In some cases contract prices lower than those quoted may obtain.

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