

RESPONSIBLE PRESCRIBING

Dentists have an obligation to prescribe responsibly and in their patients' best interests, in accordance with the principles set out in 'Standards for dental professionals.'

National Health Service (NHS) regulations define what drugs can be prescribed on the NHS. Until 2004, dentists treating NHS patients were expected to prescribe from the Dental Practitioners Formulary (DPF), a concise list of permissible drugs annexed to the British National Formulary (BNF). The DPF has subsequently been incorporated into the BNF, no longer existing as a separate list, but interspersed between drugs that cannot be prescribed by dentists on the NHS. However, a dentist can prescribe any drug from the BNF on private prescription.

We would like to remind all dentists that you should not prescribe drugs other than to meet the identified dental needs of your patients. You must make an appropriate assessment of your patient's condition, prescribe within your experience and competence and keep accurate records of the treatment.

Prescribing drugs is an integral aspect of many treatment plans, where you have knowledge of your patient's health and medical history. It is important to have an understanding of your patient's current health and medication, including any relevant medical history, in order to prescribe drugs safely. If in doubt, a dentist should contact the patient's General Practitioner (GP) or alternative General Dental Practitioner (GDP) to clarify any queries.

Part of prescribing drugs responsibly means prescribing only where you are able to form an objective view of your patient's health and clinical needs. Everyone needs objective clinical advice and treatment. Dentists who prescribe drugs for themselves or those close to them may not be able to remain objective and risk overlooking serious problems, encouraging or tolerating addiction, or interfering with care or treatment provided by other healthcare professionals.

Other than in emergencies, you should not therefore prescribe drugs for yourself or for anyone with whom you have a close personal or emotional relationship.

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