



## NI Repeat Dispensing Scheme

### **Scheme Information**

Repeat dispensing is the process by which patients can obtain supplies of their repeat medicines over a defined period of time from a pharmacy of their choice, without the need to contact their GP practice on each occasion a new supply is needed.

Following a number of successful pilots in the late 1990's, repeat dispensing has been advocated in a number of policy documents as an initiative, which could support better patient care, reduce waste and reduce GP paperwork. A good deal of progress has already been made in other parts of the UK to roll out this service.

In February 2004, Minister Angela Smith endorsed repeat dispensing as part of a package of new policy initiatives. Subsequently, the DHSSPS convened a multidisciplinary group (which included GPC, RCGP and PCC representation) to steer the initial implementation.

The repeat dispensing process involves the prescriber producing a 'repeatable' prescription on a standard HS21 prescription form for the patient's repeat medicines. A series of accompanying 'batch issues' (also printed on HS21 forms) enable the pharmacist to continue to dispense the medicines by instalments for the duration of the original repeatable prescription. This can be up to 12 months.

Repeat dispensing began roll out across in Northern Ireland on May 1st 2005. This new service is currently only available from accredited pathfinder sites comprising of 33 GP Practices and 100 community pharmacies.

Over 350 patients have been issued with repeatable prescriptions and batch issues. Initial feedback from GP practices where repeat dispensing has been implemented has been very positive, particularly from practice staff. Speaking from her Castledearg Surgery, practice manager, Mrs. Susan Young said, "Repeat dispensing has been a terrific benefit for organising repeat prescribing. Repeats account for a significant proportion of practice staff time. This initiative has saved practice staff time and reduces the inconvenience for our patients".

Repeat dispensing has been recognised as helping reduce GP administrative burden. In a Cabinet Office Paper, published in 2001, it was predicted that repeat dispensing could help free up valuable GP time to focus on more direct patient care. Dr Colin Fitzpatrick, who is already issuing repeatable prescriptions, said, "This is potentially a really useful service and one which can save considerable amounts of time for GPs".

In October 2005 all practices in Northern Ireland were written to and invited to

express an interest in providing a Repeat Dispensing Service. To date 167 practices across Northern Ireland have expressed an interest in participating in the 2nd wave, which will commence April 2006.

A number of practices will be selected from each Board area and will be notified early in 2006. The community pharmacists in these localities will then be approached once the practices have agreed to provide this service. Training for GPs, practice managers and community pharmacists is due to commence in February 2006.

The DHSSPS will be evaluating the impact of the initial phase in order to ensure that the roll - out of the scheme to those who have expressed an interest can be facilitated. For Further information please contact the Regional Repeat Dispensing Facilitators Dr. Sam Varma on 028 9147 5133 [svarma@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk](mailto:svarma@ehssb.n-i.nhs.uk) or Anne Overell on 028 9055 3708 [aoverell@ehssb.ni.nhs.uk](mailto:aoverell@ehssb.ni.nhs.uk)