January 2017

Dear colleague,

Prescribing anti-epileptic drugs to people with epilepsy

It is important for anyone with epilepsy to maintain a consistent supply of the same version of their anti-epileptic drug (AED) or combination of these drugs.

Switching between a branded drug and a generic drug or between different generic drugs may affect the bioavailability of the active ingredient in the medication and cause a breakthrough seizure or side effects. The same may occur when prescribing or dispensing parallel import drugs. These occurences are reportable side effects under the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Authority's (MHRA) yellow card scheme.

Just one single seizure can impact on an individual with epilepsy's ability to drive, their employment and well being and may increase their risk of injury and harm.

The key factor is consistency.

Please ensure that:
- **This person is always prescribed the same version of the AED or combination of AEDs which control their seizures.**
- **You write the name of the brand on the prescription so that the pharmacist gives your patient that specific version. If prescribing a generic AED, please add the name of the drug company.**
- **You do not switch between brands or generics but keep the same formulation.**
- **If a change to medication is made, the patient is made aware of this.**

This advice is in line with the recommendation of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) in their guidance on the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy (2012).

The annual cost of AEDs to the NHS is less that one per cent of the total budget for drugs. Although prescribing generic drugs may reduce expenditure on medication, it could aslo result in hidden costs such as emergency visits to hospital and extra clinic appointments.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Ley Sander, MD PhD FRCP
Medical director, Epilepsy Society