



NHS Management Executive
St. Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

18th March 1999

Dear Colleague

**ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION OF GP
PRESCRIPTIONS TO COMMUNITY PHARMACISTS**

Summary

1. This MEL sets out the policy in relation to electronic transmission of prescriptions in Scotland.

Background

2. On 25 September 1998 the Minister announced the intention to explore the potential for electronic transmission of prescription information.

3. The policy objectives are:

- To improve patient care through effective electronic exchange of information, including prescribing information, between healthcare professionals.
- To enable the electronic transfer of appropriate clinical information to promote safe, accurate and effective prescribing and dispensing and supply of medicines to patients.
- To provide the NHS in Scotland with essential information for a range of purposes including prescribing and dispensing audit, management of the drugs bill, education and research.
- To ensure such systems provide controlled access only to the NHS approved parties by means of secure systems and agreed protocols which protect patient and professional confidentiality and preserve existing intellectual property rights.
- To ensure that patients are not inhibited in any way in their choice of dispensing services.

Addressees

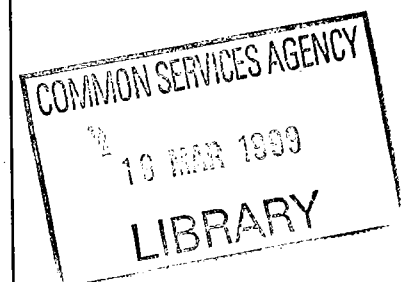
For action:
General Managers, Health Boards

For information:
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*'Stopgap study' filed
separately*

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4. Against these objectives Ministers have concluded that any system adopted should be consistent across Scotland and within the overall control of the NHS in order to protect patient confidentiality and ensure appropriate management of the information.

5. Procurement action will shortly be initiated to identify an appropriate solution to our requirements which will also include the need to set the electronic capture of prescription information against the broader aim of creating an Electronic Health Record. In the meantime Health Boards should advise GP Practices that local initiatives are not appropriate.

Action

6. Health Boards are asked to convey this policy to General Medical Practitioners and Community Pharmacists and to discourage, in the meantime, local initiatives for electronic transmission of prescriptions.

Yours sincerely



AGNES ROBSON
Director of Primary Care