

Policy for medicinal cannabis / CANCARD requests

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Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to outline the practice stance on the provision of prescribing of medicinal cannabis or requests for CANCARD applications.

From 1st November 2018, unlicensed cannabis-based products for medicinal use were reclassified as Schedule 2 controlled drugs and are able to be prescribed medicinally where there is deemed an unmet clinical need. Currently, the only licensed medicinal product is Sativex, which is only to be prescribed by clinicians listed on the Specialist Register or the GMC. All other products are unlicensed, and illegal for GPs to initiate.

The East of England, Priorities Advisory Committee (PAC), advises that GP continuation of treatment initiated by authorised specialists, including treatment initiated by authorised specialists within the private sector is not recommended, all prescribing should remain with the responsible specialist.

Due to the specialist nature of these unlicensed cannabis-based products and in line with NHS England guidance, PAC do not currently consider them to be suitable for shared care arrangements, and GP prescribing is not recommended. All forms of licensed medicinal cannabis remain red on formulary, indicating it is specialist / hospital prescribing only.

Requests from patients

Patients requesting prescriptions who are currently under the care of a specialist should be advised to discuss their treatment plan with the specialist and obtain further prescriptions from them.

Patients requesting prescriptions who are not currently under the care of a specialist should only be referred to specialist services where clinically appropriate and in line with current pathways.

Information for patients on the availability of cannabis based medicinal products is available on the NHS website here <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/medical-cannabis/>

Any letters received from specialists indicating the patient is being prescribed medicinal cannabis, should be added as a hospital medication, to flag for awareness and interaction purposes.

Requests for CANCARD

CANCARD Ltd are requesting that surgeries provide information on patient's diagnosed conditions related to use of cannabis based medicinal products (CBMP) and to confirm they have discussed the licensed medication with their GP, which will enable the patient to be issued with a medical cannabis card (CANCARD).

The CANCARD website states that the CANCARD is evidence that a cardholder has a qualifying condition for which medical cannabis may be prescribed. It also advises that the CANCARD can be shown to police to claim that use is for medical purposes, which could then be used as a method to legitimise illicit use and/or illegal possession of a Class B controlled substance.

The Home Office and Department of Health and Social Care have not endorsed this company and do not support this. Any endorsements are personal and not of organisations. To render possession lawful, the product must have been prescribed and supplied in accordance with the 2018 regulations.

GPs should not impart information i.e. confirm a diagnosis with CANCARD. They should advise the company to contact the prescriber of the cannabis product as it is NOT a drug that is prescribed in primary care. This measure, should in turn, reduce the risk of legitimising illicit possession of a cannabis (Class B) containing product.

N.B. Possession of a CANCARD does not automatically mean that a person is in legal possession of a CBMP, the police have a duty to check that products have been prescribed as described above before making decisions on whether a person is in legal possession or not.