

**From the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer  
Mrs Cathy Harrison**



Department of  
**Health**

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

[www.health-ni.gov.uk](http://www.health-ni.gov.uk)

## **FOR ACTION**

Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning and  
Performance Group (*for onward transmission  
to relevant staff*)

Chief Executive, Business Services Organisation  
(*for onward transmission to relevant staff*)

Assistant Director of Integrated Care, Head of  
Pharmacy and Medicines Management, SPPG  
(*for onward distribution to Community  
Pharmacies*).

Head of General Medical Services, SPPG (*for  
onward distribution to GP Practices*)

GP Medical Advisers, Strategic Planning and  
Performance Group.

Castle Buildings

Stormont

BELFAST

BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 90 523219

Email: [cathy.harrison@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.harrison@health-ni.gov.uk)

Our Ref HE1/22/515359

Date: 20 February 2023

Dear Colleagues,

## **SERIOUS SHORTAGE PROTOCOLS – HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT) MEDICATION – EXTENSION OF EXPIRY DATES**

Serious shortage protocols (SSPs) under the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 (HMRs) are an additional tool to manage and mitigate medicines shortages. An SSP enables community pharmacists to supply a specified medicine in accordance with a protocol rather than a prescription, without needing to seek authorisation from the prescriber, saving time for patients, pharmacists and prescribers. They are used in the case of a serious shortage, where a medicine would be likely to be out of stock for some time, and if, in the opinion of ministers, it would help manage the supply situation.

I am writing to advise that in response to a significant ongoing disruption to the supply of Estradot® 50mcg and 100mcg patches, the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has extended the expiry date of two existing UK-wide Serious Shortage Protocols (SSPs) in order to help mitigate against the continued shortages and supply issues that are being experienced with these products:

- [SSP048](#) for Estradot® 50mcg patches was due to expire 17 February 2023 but has been further extended to **Friday 24 February 2023**.
- [SSP049](#) for Estradot® 100mcg patch was due to expire 17 February 2023 but has been further extended to **Friday 17 March 2023**.

Pharmacists must ensure that the patient's prescriber and/or GP practice is notified when supplying a patient in accordance with this SSP as soon as practically possible, and within 3 working days. Please refer to '[Outline of Operational Guidance for Dispensers in response to issue of a Serious Shortage Protocol](#)' on the BSO website for more information.

Community pharmacists should use their professional skill and judgement to decide whether it is reasonable and appropriate to substitute the patient's prescribed order for a supply under these active SSPs. The patient/carer will also need to agree to supply under the SSP.

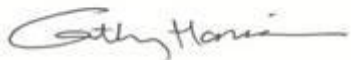
Should the quantity on the prescription be unclear, the pharmacist should consult with the patient and use their professional judgement to make an appropriate supply under these SSPs. Pharmacists should refer to the relevant Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) and Patient Information Leaflets (PIL) to inform these decisions.

If a patient/carer declines to receive the medicine under these SSPs, the pharmacist should use their professional judgement to determine if other courses of action are appropriate whilst taking into consideration wider supply issues. If this does not address their concerns, the patient/carer should be referred back to their prescriber for advice.

#### **Action Required**

All relevant staff should be made aware of the extended expiry dates of these SSPs. I would therefore ask SPPG to bring this information to the attention of GP Practices and Community Pharmacists directly.

Yours sincerely,



**Cathy Harrison**  
**Chief Pharmaceutical Officer**