

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



Department of
Health

An Roinn Sláinte

Mánnystrie O Poustie

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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.

Dear Colleagues,

SERIOUS SHORTAGE PROTOCOLS – HORMONE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (HRT) MEDICATION -

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 issued two new 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 every Estradot® 50mcg patch originally prescribed, one Evorel® 50mcg patch must be supplied.
- [SSP049](#) – for every Estradot® 100mcg patch originally prescribed, one Evorel® 100mcg patch must be supplied.

These SSPs have been authorised by DHSC Ministers and apply in all parts of the UK. **Both SSPs currently have an expiry date of 17 February 2023.**

Pharmacists should refer to the latest version of these SSPs which are now available on the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) website - <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pharmacies-gp-practices-and-appliance-contractors/serious-shortage-protocols-ssps> - and will shortly be available on the Business Services Organisation (BSO) dedicated SSP page on its website - www.hscbusiness.hscni.net/services/3063.htm

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.

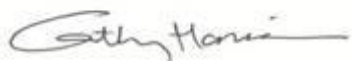
Should the quantity on the prescription be unclear, the pharmacist should consult with the patient and use their professional judgement to make an appropriate supply under these SSPs. Pharmacists should refer to the relevant Summary of Product Characteristics (SPC) and Patient Information Leaflets (PIL)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