

FAO: ALL IN HOURS PRIMARY CARE COLLEAGUES

Dear All

It's only natural at Christmas that the thoughts of many of us turn to those less fortunate than ourselves.

While I appreciate that 'out of hours clinicians' may not be the first such cohort to jump into your head (!) please do spare a thought for those of us who will be doing our very best to look after your patients while you take a well-deserved rest over the holiday period. We are more than happy to do so, but both myself and your out of hours clinical colleagues would be enormously grateful if you could, wherever possible, 'clear the decks' before you break for Christmas with regards routine in hours work which sometimes spills over into the out of hours period. When it does so, it can further increase what may already be a high level of pressure on our service and can, therefore, impact on our ability to swiftly assess patients who present with new, truly unexpected and genuinely urgent problems when their own surgery is closed.

The key areas for us are around TEP forms/'just in case' medications in patients nearing the end of life and also routine repeat prescription requests. A point you may not be aware of unless you also work out of hours sessions yourself is that, pending a future update to our out of hours clinical software, we still cannot send controlled drug prescriptions electronically. This, coupled with restricted pharmacy opening times over Christmas, can present us with significant logistical challenges and risks leading to delay in patients/carers/community nurses being able to obtain vital prescription items. This is obviously particularly important in EoL care. In view of this, it would be incredibly helpful to us if as many patients as possible could have TEP/JiC in place where appropriate before the Christmas break and if routine repeat prescription requests could also be dealt with as far as possible before your practice closes on Christmas Eve.

One particular point regarding JiC meds is that, given the difficulties we sometimes encounter when trying to 're-stock' JiC supplies that have been used up, you might wish to consider issuing slightly larger quantities than usual in order to minimise the risk of the JiC packs running out between Christmas Eve and December 27th.

I am very grateful to you for taking the time to read this and for your continued hard work in hours, which greatly benefits us when looking after your patients when your practice is closed. Many out of hours clinicians, myself included, also work in daytime primary care so we see and feel the same pressures you face first hand and are fully aware of how challenging it can be. We need to support one another – and by addressing the areas I have highlighted above you will make the role of the clinicians working OOH considerably easier and enable them to focus their attention on those patients who urgently need their input.

Many thanks again – and from all of us at Devon Doctors have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



*Dr Mark Eggleton
(Medical Director, Devon Doctors)*