

Medicines on patient transfer within and between NHS Lothian healthcare premises



Purpose of this procedure:

To ensure continuity of medicines supply and to avoid missed medicine doses when patients are transferred within and between NHS Lothian acute and community hospitals.

For the specific requirements of NHS Lothian community hospitals, care homes and hospices, refer to the NHS Lothian Guidance *Medication supply for transfer to NHS Lothian Community hospitals, and discharge to care homes and hospices* (document in development)

For information relating to the transfer of patient's medicines to other hospitals out with NHS Lothian or for emergency transfer, refer to sections 3.5 and 3.6 of this procedure, and to the NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicine procedure, [NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicines Policy procedures \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk), section 14, '*Issue of medicines for patients to take away from hospital*'. For information on the safe transport of medicines please refer to the NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicine procedure, [The transport of medicines](#).

The Procedure:

1.0 Communication about medicines on patient transfer

- 1.1 When a patient is transferred to another clinical area within the same hospital site, or a different NHS Lothian healthcare premises, the nurse responsible for the patient's care and the nurse receiving the patient must plan to ensure that the required doses of medicines are not missed or delayed.
- 1.2 A telephone conversation to organise medicine supplies is recommended.

2.0 Medicines supply on patient transfer to another NHS Lothian healthcare premises

- 2.1 The patient's own medicines, other medicines supplied for the individual patient's use and other prescribed medicines not immediately available in the receiving clinical area must be transferred or ordered in advance by the receiving ward.
- 2.2 Where possible, provide at least 7 days' supply of medicines. If a 7-day supply is not available at the point of transfer, do not delay transfer but liaise with the downstream ward to ensure a supply is available as ward stock or can be ordered and delivered to avoid the patient missing any doses.
- 2.3 Patients own multi-compartmental compliance aids (MCA) should be transferred with the patient but must not be used for administration of medicines without approval by a pharmacist., e.g. dosette.

- 2.4 Items stored in the refrigerator can be transferred but the cold chain should be maintained as per the manufacturer's instructions. Refer to procedure, [The transport of medicines](#), section 2.
- 2.5 Patient's own controlled drugs should be transferred with the patient and the records in the patients' own controlled drug book updated in the discharging and receiving wards. Ward stock schedule 2 and schedule 3, controlled drugs must not be transferred. If the schedule 2 and 3 controlled drug is not immediately available on the receiving ward, then it should be ordered by the nurse receiving the patient. If this is not possible, then the nurse from the transferring ward can order individually labelled schedule 2 and 3 controlled drugs on an immediate discharge letter for transfer with the patient. Refer to the procedure for 'Controlled drugs'. [Controlled Drugs Procedures \(nhslothian.scot\)](#)
- 2.6 The nurses must check that all medicines in the process of being administered to the patient during transfer are correct for the patient, e.g., intravenous infusion or syringe driver. For controlled drugs, refer to the NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicine procedure for *controlled drugs*. [Controlled Drugs Procedures \(nhslothian.scot\)](#)
- 2.7 Nurses should check the medicines against the medicine's paper or electronic prescription and administration record on transfer and when receiving the patient to ensure that the medicines supplied are for that patient and are currently prescribed (refer to section 4). In clinical areas using the one-stop dispensing system, completion of the patient details on over-labelled medicines is not required prior to transfer.

3.0 Transfer of medicines

This section refers to the **patients' lockable medicine cabinets**. In wards that do not use these, the medicines should be transferred and stored in **the ward's secure medicines storage area**. All schedule 2 and 3 (subject to safe custody), controlled drugs must be stored in the ward CD controlled drug cabinet, with the patient's own controlled drugs being segregated from ward stock.

3.1 Within a ward

If a patient is being transferred to a different bed within the same ward which uses patient's lockable medicine cabinets, then nursing staff are responsible for ensuring that all appropriate medicines are removed from the patient's current lockable medicine cabinet, taken to the new bedside by the escort and locked in the appropriate patient lockable medicine cabinet.

3.2 Within the same hospital

All medicines removed from the patient's lockable medicine cabinet by the responsible nurse must be taken securely to the new ward by the escort and locked in the appropriate patient's lockable medicine cabinet by the nurse on the receiving ward. If lockable bedside medicine cabinets are not used, then appropriate medicines, as detailed in section 1 above, should be transferred with the patient and stored in the ward's secure medicines storage area.

3.3 To another NHS Lothian healthcare premises

All medicines removed from the patient's lockable medicine cabinet by the responsible nurse must be taken securely to the new hospital ward by the escort and locked away by the nurse on the receiving ward. If lockable bedside cabinets are not used, then appropriate medicines, as detailed in

section 1 above, should be transferred with the patient and stored in the ward's secure medicines storage area.

3.4 Short term leave or similar

For patients transferred for a short time out-with the hospital, their medicines will be stored in the lockable medicine cabinet on the original ward.

3.5 To another hospital out-with NHS Lothian

Patients transferred to another hospital out-with NHS Lothian should be regarded as being discharged from the ward. The procedure for discharge of patients must be followed. Please refer to the procedure for [Issue of medicines for patients to take away from hospital](#) (section 14).

3.6 Emergency transfer

If a patient is being transferred to another hospital as an emergency, then a discharge prescription is not required. Patients should be transferred with a comprehensive list of medicines in a transfer letter, on a completed prescription and administration record or a copy of the Hospital Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration System (HEPMA) 7-day medicine administration chart (MAC) and medicine administration profile (MAP) along with all currently prescribed medicines from the patient's lockable medicine cabinet. Any patient's own refrigerator items and patient's own controlled drugs should also be included.

4.0 Medicines documentation

Patients transferred between wards which both have the Hospital Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration System (HEPMA), do not require to send medicines documentation as this can be accessed by the transferring and receiving ward electronically.

Critical care units and other areas with bespoke electronic prescribing systems should have systems in place for the safe transfer of patients' medicine information between clinical areas which comply with NHS Lothian Medicines Policy procedures and must be approved through NHS Lothian Medicines governance route.

In all other cases, where the receiving ward does not have electronic prescribing, the patients should be transferred with a completed prescription and administration record or a copy of the Hospital Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration System (HEPMA) 7day medicine administration chart (MAC) and medicine administration profile (MAP). For the specific requirements of NHS Lothian community hospitals, care homes and hospices, refer to the NHS Lothian Guidance 'Medication supply for transfer to NHS Lothian Community hospitals, and discharge to care homes and hospices (document in development)

Associated materials/references:

[The Safe Use of Medicines Policy](#)

[Controlled Drugs Procedures \(nhslothian.scot\)](#)

[The transport of medicines](#)

[NHS Lothian Safe Use of Medicines Policy\(scot.nhs.uk\)](#), section 14, 'Issue of medicines for patients to take away from hospital'.

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