

23/08/2018

Dear NUMSAS provider,

Thank you for your involvement with the NHS Urgent Medicine Supply Advanced Service (NUMSAS).

This month's update focuses on the supply of antibiotics through NUMSAS. However, due to some queries that have been received, there is a point to highlight relating to completing prescription tokens for payment. The same rules apply for NUMSAS as with FP10 prescriptions, and where the date of birth is handwritten on an FP10, the patient must sign the back even if they are age exempt. Where the date of birth is printed onto the FP10DT EPS dispensing token by a computer and a patient is 16 or under or 60 or over then a patient is exempt from the need to complete and sign the declaration.

Managing requests for antimicrobials

In reviewing the data on NUMSAS it is clear that there are cases where antibiotics have been supplied on NUMSAS and this update aims to provide some more information on the topic. All pharmacists should be aware of the concern relating to the growing threat of antibiotic resistance. If you have not already done so you are encouraged to become an Antibiotic Guardian by going to the Antibiotic Guardian website¹

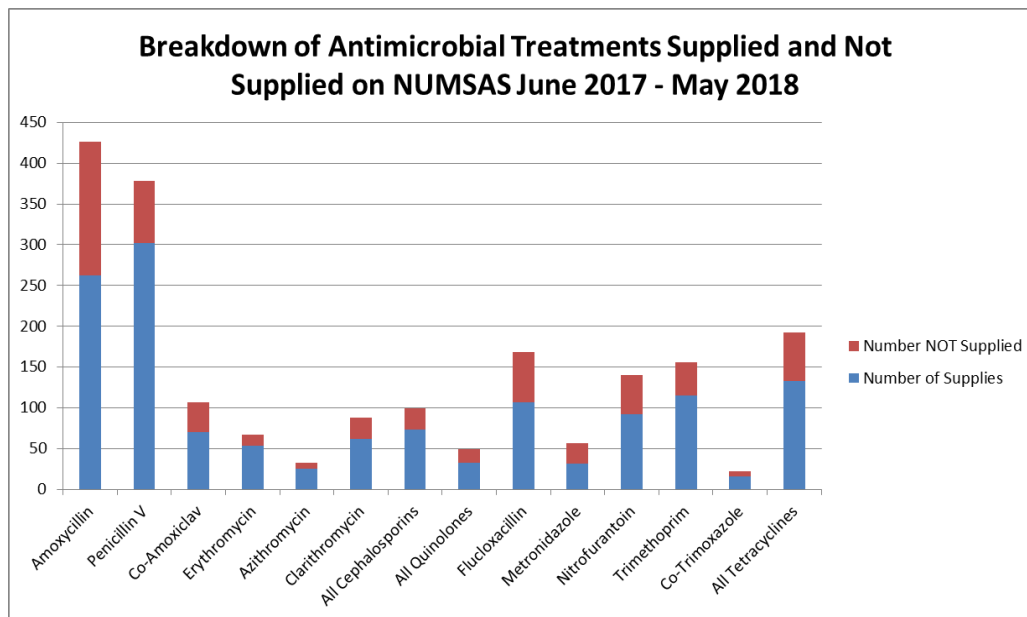
It is important to recognise that some patients may present with an expectation of getting antibiotics, even if it is not clinically appropriate. Call handlers within the NHS 111 providers are not clinically trained and they will not suggest to the patient that they need antibiotics. Rather, there is acknowledgement that some patients will need to be assessed in order to determine whether an urgent repeat antibiotic prescription is appropriate or if escalation is needed, and therefore the referral is sent to the pharmacist through NUMSAS.

The fact that they may have had a prescription previously for an antibiotic is not sufficient justification that it is appropriate for them to receive it again. The pharmacist must use their professional judgement to determine whether a supply is justified or not and this applies for antibiotics as well as any other request that comes through NUMSAS. Where a patient consents, accessing their Summary Care Record or another electronic health record can assist in understanding previous prescriptions for antibiotics.

There may be cases where an urgent repeat antibiotic supply is justified, for example, if a patient has lost their antibiotics partway through a course, or if they have left their antibiotics at home and they are away, or if a liquid antibiotic has been spilled and a replacement is needed to complete the course. These examples highlight the importance of reviewing each request on an individual basis.

Data supplied by the NHSBSA show that from June 2017 to May 2018, there were 2462 requests for anti-infective treatments, with 1650 (67%) of requests supplied and 812 (33%) requests not supplied. Of those 2462 requests, 2050 were for antimicrobials (not including eye/ear/nose products). The following graph shows a breakdown of the top 1980 out of the 2050 antimicrobial drugs requested, broken down by what was supplied and not supplied.

¹ <http://antibioticguardian.com/>



Further work to understand this data will be carried out, however it is of concern that the majority of items supplied are the broad-spectrum antibiotics that are most linked to antibiotic resistance.

When considering whether to issue a supply or not, pharmacists should be aware of guidance documents that NICE have published on antibiotic use². In particular, pharmacists should be aware of the helpful flowchart that NICE have published to assist prescribers when considering supplying an antimicrobial³. Please follow the [links in the footnote below](#) to view the NICE guidance document and flowchart.

This includes issues to consider in any discussion with the patient or the family, including whether or not an antimicrobial is appropriate and how to reassure a patient with a self-limiting illness that it can be managed without an antibiotic. The patient should understand and accept this outcome, otherwise they may re-enter the service for the same issue at another access point.

Thank you for your participation in this service, and for the time and effort you have spent helping patients when they need an urgent supply of medication.

Feedback on NUMSAS is welcome at england.pharmacyintegration@nhs.net – please include the name and address of your pharmacy so the appropriate Regional Pharmacy Integration Lead can respond.

Pharmacy Integration Programme
NHS England
england.pharmacyintegration@nhs.net

² <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/conditions-and-diseases/infections/antibiotic-use>

³ <https://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/antimicrobial-stewardship>