Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

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News release

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PRESCRIBING OF MODIFIED-RELEASE MORPHINE PREPARATIONS

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain's Practice Committee has reviewed its position on brand-name prescribing of modified-release morphine preparations and fentanyl patches.

The Committee has heard from the British National Formulary (BNF) that there is no compelling evidence to show that switching between brands of modified-release morphine preparations with the same release profile affects pain control. Also, there is no evidence of a difference in the rate of delivery between brands of fentanyl patches when used in accordance with the product licence. The Committee understands that the BNF has sought from the Department of Health evidence to support its recommendations in *Building a Safer NHS for Patients*.

In the light of this information, the Practice Committee does not recommend routine brand-name prescribing of modified-release morphine preparations and fentanyl patches. In the case of modified-release oral morphine preparations, the BNF states that dosage requirements should be reviewed if the brand is changed.

The Practice Committee agreed some good practice points that it commends to the profession.

- Pharmacists should take steps to prevent unintentional changes of the brand supplied

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to patients. If the brand of strong modified-release morphine preparations needs to be changed then the pharmacist should ensure that the patient and the patient's carers understand and accept the need for change.

- Pharmacists should adhere to local prescribing policies on the use of long-acting modified-release morphine preparations.

- There are important differences between matrix patches and reservoir patches. Reservoir patches of fentanyl should **never** be cut to deliver a smaller dose because this disrupts the controlled-release mechanism. The practice of cutting fentanyl matrix patches falls outside the product licence and pharmacists should be aware that the summary of product characteristics for a brand of matrix patch states, "Durogesic DTrans patches should not be cut. No data are available on cut or divided patches".

For general enquiries regarding this guidance please contact Robert Clayton in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain's Practice and Quality Improvement Directorate at practice@rpsgb.org

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For media enquiries please contact the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain's Public Relations Unit

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