



Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol
Cwm Taf
University Health Board

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21 February 2018
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Chair and Chief Executive

Mr David J Rowlands AM
Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Dear Mr Rowlands

Petition P-05-784 Prescription drug dependence and withdrawal - recognition and support

Thank you for your letter of 31 January 2018. Cwm Taf UHB has recognised for a number of years the harm and adverse effects that dependence on benzodiazepines and anti-depressants can have on individuals.

The All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG) primary Care prescribing indicators tell us that we have a high prescribing volume of these types of medicines within our Health Board. It also tells us that this volume has been decreasing over the past few years as actions have been implemented to avoid initiating these medicines, support timely and appropriate stopping of them and also support the managed withdrawal of long term use.

<http://www.awmsg.org/docs/awmsg/medman/National%20Prescribing%20Indicators%202017-2018.pdf>

A key action is to provide alternative pathways to initiating these medicines where appropriate. The Valley Steps initiative is a social enterprise scheme which is supported by CTUHB and offers open access to low level tier 0 & 1 services such as stress management, mindfulness and other coping strategies. People can attend through their own actions or be signposted or referred by health professionals. The link to their website is: <http://www.valleysteps.org/>

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GP practice clusters have also commissioned the services of the third sector MIND to provide low level (tier 0 and 1) advice and support to patients with low mood, depression etc. This has been extremely well received by practices but also by patients too. Other social prescribing schemes being initiated may also have an impact in this area.

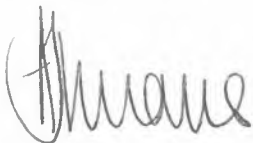
The prescribing of antidepressants and benzodiazepines is supported by AWMSG prescribing guidelines and prescribers in both primary and secondary care have access to the advice of the pharmacists and community mental health practitioners working with their teams. The new cluster based pharmacists in primary care and also primary care advisor pharmacists are involved in medication review clinics, where appropriate de-prescribing of medicines can be managed.

The support of individuals who are dependent on or withdrawing from these medicines is provided on a patient by patient basis by their GP and the Community Mental Health Teams. A tailored support programme, which can include counselling services, is provided to those patients who wish to stop or reduce the use of benzodiazepines or antidepressants.

We are constantly reviewing and improving our services for patients and would be interested in any recommendations or areas of good practice which this petition may produce.

I trust this answers your questions and if I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Allison Williams
Chief Executive/Prif Weithredydd