

Guidance on the Use of Drugs in the Treatment of Obesity

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- 1 *Good Medical Practice*¹ sets out the standards of practice and care which doctors are expected to meet, including advice that doctors must prescribe only the treatment, drugs, or appliances that serve the patient's needs.
- 2 To fulfil this requirement when considering the treatment of obese patients, you must take account of current authoritative published guidance, including that on the use of drugs in the treatment of obesity. In particular, the Royal College of Physicians of London has published advice on what should be regarded as realistic goals for weight loss in different categories of patient; with detailed guidelines on managing obesity, including in those cases where the use of drugs may be appropriate as an adjunct to other treatment. (This advice is currently contained in the College's report entitled *Clinical management of overweight and obese patients with particular reference to the use of drugs*, published in December 1998²).
- 3 If you are considering prescribing drugs for the treatment of obesity, following the principles in *Good Medical Practice*, it is essential that you:
 - a Take an adequate history from the patient, including details of any current medical condition and of any medication which the patient is already taking;
 - b Examine the patient before prescribing;
 - c Satisfy yourself that the patient has understood what is proposed, and consents to it, before you prescribe³,

¹ 'Good Medical Practice' General Medical Council, 178 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6JE. July 1998 edition. Tel: 0171 915 3507, Fax: 0171 915 3685; E-mail: publications@gmc-uk.org; Website: www.gmc-uk.org.

² Available from the Publications Department, Royal College of Physicians, 11 St Andrews Place, Regents Park, London NW1 4LE. Price £9.20p

³ Guidance on consent is given in our booklet 'Seeking Patients' Consent: the ethical considerations.' General Medical Council, 178 Great Portland Street, London W1N 6JE. November 1998. Tel: 0171 915 3507; Fax: 0171 915 3685; E-mail: publications@gmc-uk.org; Website: www.gmc-uk.org.

d Following current authoritative advice on which preparations are considered to be effective and their safe administration;

e Do not prescribe in excess of the proper dosages for such drugs;

f Monitor the patient's health and any side-effects which might be caused by the drugs.

4. Good Medical Practice also makes clear that doctors practising in most specialities should usually accept patients only with a referral from a general practitioner or other appropriate health care professional. If you are not the patient's general practitioner, but decide, exceptionally, to accept a patient for treatment of obesity or weight control without referral, you must explain to the patient the importance and benefits of keeping their general practitioner informed, and seek their agreement to do so. You must inform the patient's general practitioner before starting treatment, unless the patient objects to the disclosure.
- 5 Where patients do not wish their GP to be informed, or have no GP, you must take responsibility for providing all necessary after care for the patient and, if you propose to prescribe anti-obesity drugs, you must ensure that the patient is not suffering from any medical condition or receiving any other treatment which would make the prescription of such drugs unsuitable or dangerous.

Withdrawn - OGD 2017-2018