

## QIPP Detail Aid

Providing support for quality in prescribing

# PREDNISOLONE - USE PLAIN, NOT SOLUBLE TABLETS

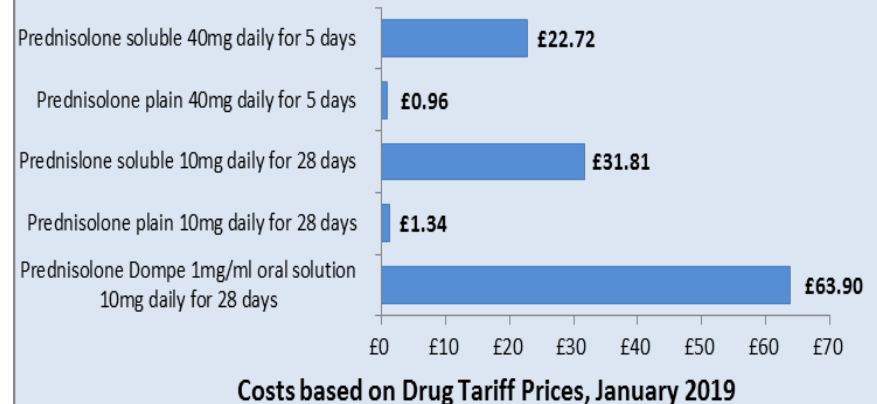
### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Prednisolone soluble tablets currently cost over **23 times** as much as the plain tablets in Primary Care (57p per tablet compared with 2p per tablet).<sup>1</sup>
- In the 2017-18 financial year, Barnsley CCG spent over £28,000 on soluble prednisolone 5mg tablets. Soluble tablets accounted for less than 3% of prednisolone prescriptions but 38% of the total spend on oral prednisolone.
- Nearly as much was spent on soluble prednisolone (£28,900 for less than 900 prescriptions) than all the other prescriptions (£32,161 for >28000 prescriptions) for this strength of tablet.
- If half of the prescriptions for soluble prednisolone had been plain tablets instead, approximately £14k would have been available in the 2017-18 financial year in Barnsley to spend on other treatments.

### WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

- Prednisolone is used widely for short courses in inflammatory and allergic disorders and occasionally for longer term immunosuppression.
- Both 1mg and 5mg strengths are relatively small tablets and do not present a problem in swallowing for the majority of patients.
- Prednisolone is generally well absorbed after taking orally and the bioavailability of the soluble and plain tablets are similar<sup>2</sup>.
- Soluble tablets may be justified in a limited number of clinical situations, for example those with fine-bone enteral feeding tubes. However administration of plain prednisolone tablets is faster for nursing and care staff and may be more convenient for patients.
- Limited anecdotal information suggests that some brands of the plain tablets disperse in water to make a fine suspension (unlicensed use). See NEWT guidelines<sup>3</sup>. Prednisolone Dompe® 1mg/ml oral solution is also available\*. It is available in single use containers (5mg/5ml) but costs twice as much as the soluble tablets.

### What are the costs?



### KEY MESSAGES

- **Plain prednisolone tablets are significantly cheaper than soluble ones and should be preferred in the majority of patients.**
- **Soluble tablets are more time consuming than plain tablets for parents, carers and nursing staff.**
- **Patients taking soluble tablets should be reviewed regularly with a view to changing to plain where appropriate.**
- **Older children may find plain tablets more convenient to take than soluble ones.**

## References:

1. Drug Tariff 2019. Accessed January 2019
2. Prednisolone. In Drugdex System, Truven Health Analytics, USA via [www.micromedex.com](http://www.micromedex.com), Accessed January 2015.
3. NEWT guidelines. Available at: <http://newtguidelines.com/>. Accessed September 2018

**Adapted from the Trent Medicines Information QIPP Detail Aid. Endorsed by Barnsley Area Prescribing Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2019**

