

From the Rt Hon Mike O'Brien QC MP
Minister of State for Health Services



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Keith Simpson MP
House of Commons
Westminster
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10 MAR 2010

Dear Keith,

Thank you for your letter of 22 February to Ann Keen enclosing correspondence from your constituent Ms Linda Elsegood of [REDACTED] about the use of low dose naltrexone (LDN) for the treatment of multiple sclerosis (MS).

I was sorry to read of Ms Elsegood's ill health.

In the UK, naltrexone is obtainable under the trade name of Nalorex and is used, together with other forms of treatment such as counselling, to help patients remain free from dependence on heroin, methadone and other similar opiate drugs of addiction. Naltrexone is not licensed for use in the treatment of MS at any dose.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for the evaluation of Marketing Authorisation (MA) applications for medicinal products. It is only able to grant an MA after supporting data have been submitted to demonstrate that the quality, safety and efficacy of the product are satisfactory for the intended use. The MHRA is not able to initiate clinical trials. It is also worth noting with regard to the cost and who has to pay for LDN, that it is up to the individual local Primary Care Trust as to whether it will allow doctors in its area to prescribe products like LDN and whether it will reimburse the dispensing pharmacist.

Nevertheless, there is provision in both UK and European legislation for doctors to prescribe a medicinal product specially prepared and for administration to a particular patient to meet a special clinical need. This is the direct personal responsibility of the prescribing doctor. It is evident that some UK doctors are already prescribing LDN for their patients on this basis.

It is possible for a pharmaceutical company to produce LDN formulations to supply pharmacists, at the request of a doctor, for use on an 'individual patient' basis. There are provisions for MS patients to obtain LDN in the UK, but it would be for the individual patient and his or her doctor to discuss and consider whether the use of LDN is appropriate for the patient's particular clinical need.

Martindale Pharmaceutical Company produces 3 and 4.5 mg rapid release LDN capsules. These are produced under a 'special' licence and although the company is not allowed to advertise the product, it can supply it to a pharmacist at the request of a doctor for use on an 'individual patient' basis.

As you are probably aware, there are a growing number of websites concerning the use of LDN for a variety of medical conditions. The first LDN Conference was held in April 2009 at Glasgow University, showing that there is an increasing interest in this topic.

The LDN website, at: www.lowdosenaltrexone.org, is probably one of the most comprehensive websites devoted to this issue and has a large number of links to other sites. It also provides information about what research is being conducted in a number of therapeutic areas with LDN.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

MIKE O'BRIEN QC MP



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Pharmaceutical Companies compounding LDN

There are several Pharmaceutical Companies producing LDN under a “special” licence in the UK, in 3 and 4.5 mg rapid release LDN capsules. The price between these companies varies.

Local chemists can fill a LDN prescription, it is advisable to ask the cost before placing an order.

Prescriptions can also be filled from anywhere within the UK by MAIL ORDER at Dickson’s chemist in Glasgow.

30 LDN capsules with an avicel filler cost £30, and liquid LDN suspension for a month’s supply costs £15. These prices included recorded delivery within the UK.

Due to high volume orders, their prices are much cheaper than using Martindale.

Dickson chemist state that LDN liquid can be extemporaneously prepared, using Nalorex tablets, by any pharmacy using a formula freely available in current formularies. The price to the NHS is approx £15 / 100ml.

Their contact details are:

Dickson Chemist Ltd
35 Mitchell Arcade
Rutherglen
Glasgow
G73 2LS

Tel: 0141 647 8032

Email: homedeliverypharmacy@yahoo.co.uk