



Department of Health

From the Chief Medical Officer,
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To: All general practitioners
On-line pharmacy services

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Dear colleague

GONORRHOEA AND ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

As you will be aware, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a growing clinical and public health issue of the greatest importance. It has long been recognised that gonorrhoea is at risk of becoming an untreatable disease due to the continuing emergence of AMR. In one area of the North of England a “resistance alert” related to an on-going outbreak of high-level azithromycin resistant gonorrhoea has been issued¹. We are therefore writing to underline the importance of effective antimicrobial stewardship for **all** prescribing for this infection.

Since 2011, the approach in the UK and in other countries has been to recommend the use of **dual therapy of injectable ceftriaxone and oral azithromycin**. Gonorrhoea has rapidly acquired resistance to new antibiotics, leaving few alternatives to the current recommendations. It is therefore extremely important that suboptimal treatment does not occur and, if services lack facilities to provide injectable drugs, patients are referred to a Genitourinary Medicine (GUM) clinic or sexual health service for management.

We therefore ask that you review your prescribing practice and treatment protocols to ensure that they meet the national guidelines produced by the British Association for Sexual health and HIV². For health professionals involved in remote and/or on-line prescribing there is guidance from the General Medical Council³ and the General Pharmaceutical Council.⁴

We attach great importance to this issue. We need to ensure that those diagnosed with gonorrhoea receive optimal and appropriate treatment in order to ensure effective care for that individual, protect public health and reduce the risk of AMR.

PROFESSOR DAME SALLY C DAVIES

**DR KEITH RIDGE CBE,
CHIEF PHARMACEUTICAL OFFICER**

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-protection-report-volume-9-2015/hpr-volume-9-issue-41-news-20-november>

² <http://www.bashh.org/documents/3920.pdf>

³ *Good practice in prescribing and managing medicines and devices:* (<http://www.gmcuk.org/static/documents/content/Prescribingguidance.pdf>)

⁴ http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/guidance_for_registered_pharmacies_on_distance_and_internet_services_.pdf

