Prescribing & Medicines: Dispenser Payments and Prescription Cost Analysis
An Official Statistics publication for Scotland

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About this release

This release by Information Services Division reports on the number and cost of NHS prescriptions dispensed in the community in Scotland for the financial year 2017/18. It includes a breakdown of dispensing contractor payments, which are for services provided (remuneration) and products dispensed (reimbursement). The report also includes additional information on specific Community Pharmacy services to the public.

Main Points

**Overall Cost**
- The total (net) cost for dispensing items and providing services in 2017/18 was £1.3 billion, an increase of 3.3% compared to 2016/17 and 25.7% over the last 10 years.

**Products Dispensed**
- The total number of items dispensed over the last 10 years increased by 20.5% from 85.8 million to 103.4 million items. There was little change between 2016/17 and 2017/18.
- The cost of items reimbursed (Net Ingredient Cost) has increased by 24.8% over the last 10 years.
- The cost of medicines (Gross Ingredient Cost) for items dispensed increased by 2.7% between 2016/17 and 2017/18, to £1.2 billion. This is partly due to price increases for items in short supply, new medicines and the move in supply of some high cost treatments from hospital to primary care.
- Pregabalin, used to treat epilepsy and chronic pain, had the highest total Gross Ingredient Cost in 2017/18, at £36.38 million.

**Services Provided**
- The cost for remuneration of services has increased by 0.9% between 2016/17 and 2017/18 to £216 million.
Background

Information on NHS services provided in community pharmacies, NHS prescriptions dispensed in Scotland and drugs prescribed in Scotland and dispensed elsewhere in the United Kingdom is obtained from the Prescribing Information System. GPs write the vast majority of these prescriptions, with the remainder written by authorised prescribers such as nurses, dentists and allied health professionals (AHPs). The data also include prescriptions written in hospitals that were dispensed in the community, but prescriptions dispensed within hospitals are not included. All these prescriptions are dispensed by dispensing contractors, who include community pharmacies, dispensing doctors, a small number of specialist appliance suppliers and stoma providers. Dispensing contractors receive two distinct types of payment: remuneration for the service they provide and reimbursement for the products they dispense. Payments are derived from information gathered by Practitioner Services after the pricing of prescriptions has taken place and then payment is made on behalf of NHS Boards. The main statistics reported on in this publication are volume, which is the count of all the prescription items reimbursed; the costs of remuneration of services and the cost of items reimbursed.

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Further Information

Find out more in the full report. The data from this publication is available to download from our web page.

For more information on Remuneration and Prescription Cost Analysis see the Remuneration section of our website. For related topics, please see the Prescribing and Medicines pages.

The next release of this publication will be 23 July 2019.

ISD and Official Statistics

Information Services Division (ISD) is the principal and authoritative source of statistics on health and care services in Scotland. ISD is designated by legislation as a producer of ‘Official Statistics’. Our official statistics publications are produced to a high professional standard and comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. Further information about our statistics.