Position statement on prescribing of herbal treatments and homeopathy

Sunderland CCG do not support the routine prescribing of herbal treatments and homeopathy in line with guidance from NHS England.¹

Rationale

- There is insufficient high quality evidence to demonstrate clinical effectiveness of complementary and alternative medicines.² Prescriptions or interventions are only recommended at NHS expense, where they are supported by robust evidence demonstrating clinical and cost effectiveness.
- The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) does not recommend homeopathy for the treatment of any health condition.³
- The policy on alternative/homeopathic/complementary therapies states ‘there is absolute lack of well-conducted systematic reviews that permits any basic analyses of these therapies’.⁴
- A House of Commons Science/Technology Committee report said that homeopathic remedies perform no better than placebo, and the principles on which homeopathy is based are ‘scientifically implausible’.³
- The report by the Government Science/Technology Committee reviewed evidence for and against homeopathy and concluded that the NHS should stop funding homeopathy. It also concluded that the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) should not allow homeopathic product labels to make medical claims without evidence of efficacy; homeopathic products are no longer licensed by the MHRA. Any beneficial outcomes of homeopathy are expected to be due to a placebo effect.⁵
- Sunderland CCG aim to promote evidence based medicine. Introducing unevaluated therapies would be a departure from this, especially as complementary and alternative medicines can have adverse effects, may interact with conventional medicines/healthcare, and their use could delay accurate diagnosis and treatment of disease.³,⁴

Recommendations for clinicians

- Do not prescribe complementary or alternative medicines at NHS expense.
- Do not refer NHS patients to a complementary and/or alternative medical practitioner.
- Check if patients are taking any complementary or alternative therapies, and take into account possible drug interactions or adverse effects of these therapies during reviews.
- NHS health professionals can seek advice on any aspect of drug therapy (including complementary and alternative medicine that a patient has chosen to take) by contacting Newcastle Regional Drug and Therapeutic Centre Medicines Information; 01912824631 or nuth.rdtc.mi@nhs.net

A patient information leaflet is also available: www.prescqipp.info/our-resources/bulletins/bulletin-203-items-which-should-not-be-prescribed-in-primary-care

References

5. Accessed 16/03/20