



# Prescribing Points

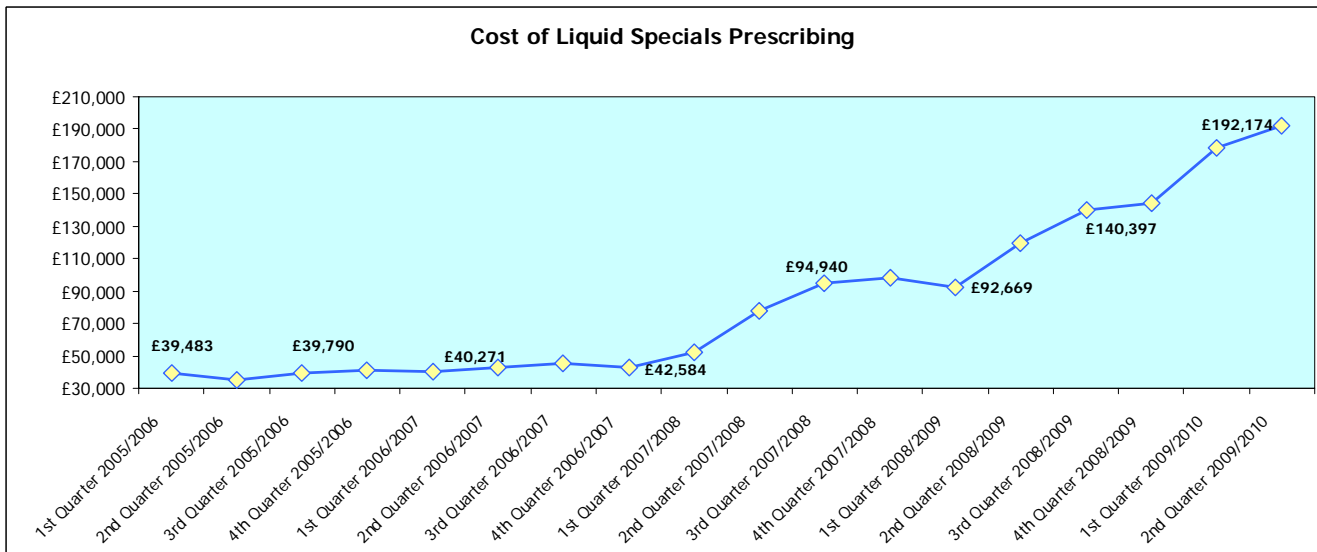
A NEWSLETTER FOR ALL HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS IN OXFORDSHIRE, WRITTEN BY THE MEDICINES MANAGEMENT TEAM, OXFORDSHIRE PCT, JUBILEE HOUSE, OXFORD BUSINESS PARK SOUTH, OXFORD, OX4 2LH.

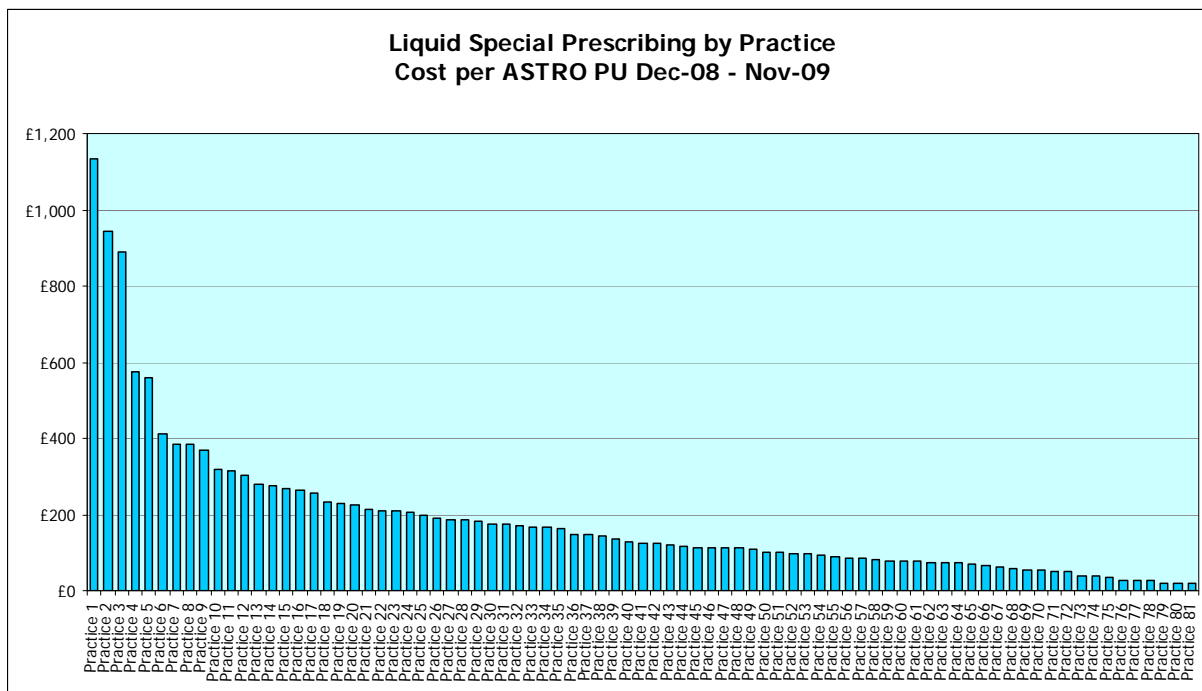
<b>February 2010</b>	<b>VOLUME 19.02</b> Written by Jane Campbell, Jo Stanney, Laura Tully
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## Liquid Special Products

Following on from previous Prescribing Points articles in 2009 (vol.18.04 March 09 and vol. 18.11 August 09) this is both a reminder of the key points and an update on the current situation. **Liquid Specials** are unlicensed liquids, manufactured by several commercial companies, where there is no commercially available, licensed, liquid preparation. They generally tend to have shorter shelf lives, often need fridge storage, can be more difficult to obtain, and are usually considerably more expensive than the capsule or tablet version of the same drug. In addition they incur a carriage charge of about £12.

During the 12 month period December 2008 to November 2009 (latest available ePACT data) the PCT spent almost **£600,000** on liquid specials. The costs are significant and have risen sharply over the last few years.





### **Therapeutic options for patients unable to take solid oral dosage forms**

UKMi have produced a Medicines Q&A reviewing the therapeutic options for patients unable to take solid oral dosage forms, and gives advice on how to choose the most appropriate presentation for a patient.

#### **Summary**

Some patients are unable to take medication in solid oral dosage forms and a stepwise approach is suggested to choose a suitable alternative:

1. If possible, use a licensed medicine in a suitable formulation to meet the patient's needs (e.g. a dispersible tablet or licensed liquid medicine). For example metformin tablets can be replaced by metformin oral powder.
2. If there is no suitable licensed formulation, consider using a licensed medicine in an unlicensed manner, for example by crushing tablets or opening capsules. For example ramipril capsules can be opened and the contents dissolved in water or administered on food.
3. In order to use a licensed medicine, consider switching to a different therapeutic agent in the same class, or to a different route of administration. In most cases a suitable licensed preparation will be available to meet the patient's needs. For example fluoxetine liquid may be a suitable alternative to sertraline.
4. In the few situations where the patient's needs cannot be met by licensed medicines, the use of a special-order product ('special') may be considered.

- ***Licensed medicines should be used where possible. They are manufactured to specific standards and have been assessed for safety and efficacy.***
- ***Special-order products are unlicensed and are not required to meet the same standards as licensed preparations. Prescribers assume greater liability when using them. They are usually considerably more expensive than licensed medicines.***

An appendix to the UKMi *Medicines Q&A* lists therapeutic options for adult patients unable to take solid oral dosage forms. A second appendix provides practical advice on the administration of medicines in these patients. The full guidelines can be accessed at: <http://www.nelm.nhs.uk/en/NeLM-Area/Evidence/Medicines-Q--A/Therapeutic-options-for-patients-unable-to-take-solid-oral-dosage-forms/>

**Examples from the guidelines for items most commonly prescribed in Oxfordshire in the three month period from September 09 to November 09:**

**Omeprazole 20mg/5ml liquid special (52 items at a cost of £8517)**

**Licensed medicines in suitable formulations**

Lansoprazole orodispersible tablets (*Zoton FasTabs*) can be allowed to disperse in the mouth then swallowed, or dispersed in water for administration orally or via a feeding tube. [28 x 30mg: £6]

Omeprazole dispersible tablets (*Losec MUPS*) can be allowed to disperse in the mouth then swallowed, or dispersed in water for administration orally. When mixed with water the tablets disintegrate to give a dispersion of small granules that can be given orally or mixed with food; care must be taken not to crush or chew the granules. They are not suitable for administration via feeding tubes. [28 x 20mg: £12]

**Lisinopril 5mg/5ml liquid special (25 items at a cost of £4614)**

**Licensed medicines in suitable formulations**

There are no suitable licensed formulations of any ACE inhibitor.

**Licensed medicines used in an unlicensed manner**

Lisinopril tablets can be dispersed in water. [28 tablets, any strength < £2]

This option is suitable for administration via feeding tubes.

**Simvastatin 20mg/5ml and 40mg/5ml liquid special (58 items at a cost of £11466)**

**Licensed medicines in suitable formulations**

There are no suitable licensed formulations of any statin.

**Licensed medicines used in an unlicensed manner**

Simvastatin tablets are film-coated but can be crushed and dispersed in water for administration orally or via a feeding tube. [28 tablets, any strength < £3]

Pravastatin tablets can be crushed and dispersed in water for administration orally or via a feeding tube; they are more readily dispersible than simvastatin tablets. [28 tablets, any strength < £3]

Atorvastatin tablets are film-coated but can be crushed and dispersed in water for administration orally or via a feeding tube. They disperse more readily than simvastatin tablets. [28 tablets: £18-30 depending on strength]

Any practice who would like support to review the prescription of liquid specials or advice regarding alternatives are welcome to contact the Prescribing and Medicines Management Team at the PCT on 01865 336868.

## Rosemont products

Rosemont pharmaceuticals is a specialist in liquid oral medicines, they produce both licensed medicines and unlicensed specials. Whilst the licensed medicines are generally not as expensive as specials there may still be a cheaper alternative for patients unable to swallow standard oral preparations.

For example:

Rosemont product	Cost	Alternative	Cost
Metformin 500mg/5ml oral solution 150ml i.e. 30 doses	£81.50	Metformin oral powder sachets 500mg x30	£3.29
Mirtazipine 15mg/ml liquid 66ml i.e. 66 doses	£47.00	Mirtazipine 15mg orodispersible tablets x30	£4.35
Aciclovir 200mg/5ml 125ml i.e. 25 doses	£29.56	Aciclovir 200mg dispersible tablets x25	£2.20

## Antimicrobial Dosage in Children

Following queries we would like to clarify that within the; **Oxfordshire Prescribing Guidelines for the Use of Antimicrobial Agents in Primary Care** dosages given for adults and children over 12 years only.

For children consult the *BNF for Children* for specific dosages and to check for licensed use but as a simple guide:

- 6-12 years use ½ adult dose
- 2-6 years use ¼ adult dose
- Under 2 years dose calculated according to body weight

*The above suggested dosages represent the average recommended for a particular infection and should be adjusted according to patient factors including age, weight, renal function, immune status, history of allergy, and pregnancy, etc.*

**As an example;** Amoxicillin - for susceptible infections<sup>1</sup>

Children 1 month – 1 year	62.5mg 3 times daily	Dose doubled in severe infection
Children 1-5 years	125mg 3 times daily	
Children 5-18 years	250mg 3 times daily	

*Please note – the above dosage is only for certain indications, further information on dosages for uncomplicated community acquired pneumonia, otitis media etc can be found in the BNF for Children*

<sup>1</sup> BNF for Children

The use of antibiotics in respiratory track infections for self-limiting respiratory tract infections in adults and children in primary care is covered in [NICE Clinical Guideline 69](#) and has been discussed in two previous Prescribing Points; click [here](#) and [here](#).

### **Ulipristal Acetate (EllaOne®) for emergency contraception**

Ulipristal acetate (EllaOne®) 30mg was licensed in May 2009 for emergency contraception within 120 hours (5 days) of unprotected sexual intercourse or contraceptive failure. It is a selective progesterone receptor modulator and the primary mode of action is thought to be via inhibition of ovulation.

- EllaOne® is less cost effective when compared to levonelle from 0-72 hours, therefore **levonelle remains first line choice EHC.**
- EllaOne® was classified by APCO in Nov 2009 as 'brown' on the Oxfordshire Prescribing Traffic Lights, for restricted prescribing in the following circumstances:  
**For use between 72 hours and 120 hours, where levonelle is not licensed and an IUCD is not preferred.**