

July 2021

**Dear Colleagues**

**Steroid Emergency Card to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults.**

This communication is to highlight the new **National Patient Safety Alert: Steroid Emergency Card** (issued August 2020). Steroids are used extensively in the management of several health conditions and therefore this Alert is relevant to any Healthcare Professional involved in the prescribing, dispensing or monitoring of steroid therapy.

**Why is there a need for a specific new Steroid Emergency Card?**

Adrenal crisis is a medical emergency and failure to recognise and treat it promptly can be fatal. Unfortunately there are several cases each year where adrenal crisis is not recognised and this leads to potentially avoidable adverse outcomes. The use of the new Steroid Emergency Card helps support timely recognition and treatment of potential adrenal crisis.

**Which patients should carry the Card and who should issue the Card?**

The attached Appendix details which individuals should be asked to carry the card, who should issue the card and how it is used alongside the existing 'blue' steroid treatment card. A PDF of the new Steroid Emergency Card is attached.

**Guidance to support prescribers**

It is worth highlighting that the guidance on which individuals on exogenous steroids should be issued with the new Steroid Emergency Card is very detailed. This is as a result of the complexity in the type, route and duration of steroids that are used within every day clinical practice. It is likely that a significant proportion of individuals on exogenous steroids should be provided with the new Steroid Emergency Card and provided with 'sick day' guidance. This may be a change in practice for some services but it is important to reduce the risk of adverse outcomes in this potentially vulnerable group.

The Appendix has been endorsed by the Steroid Emergency Card Short Life Working Group and is based on joint guidance from the Society for Endocrinology, Specialist Pharmacy Services (NHS England) and the British Association of Dermatologists.

Further work may be required within each clinical specialty to determine the best approach to implementation of the card.

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Kind regards

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