

Position statement on the prescribing of probiotics

NHS Kernow does not support the routine prescribing of probiotics for any indication, in line with NHS England's guidance on conditions for which over-the-counter items should not be routinely prescribed.

In 2018 the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS) reviewed the probiotic products VSL#3 and Vivomixx for continued inclusion in Part XV of the Drug Tariff. VSL#3 and Vivomixx were previously prescribable for 'the maintenance of remission of ileoanal pouchitis only in adults as induced by antibiotics'. The Committee concluded that the evidence did not sufficiently demonstrate that the products are clinically effective.

On this basis, both products were removed and have not been available as prescribable products under ACBS since November 2018.

VSL#3 is no longer co-prescribed in RCHT as part of the C.diff reduction strategy.

NHS Kernow does not support the prescribing of probiotics due to insufficient evidence to support their routine clinical use for any indication.

Recommendations

- Review all prescribing of probiotics and recommend discontinue all probiotics on prescription.
- Probiotics are available for purchase by patients over-the-counter if they wish, but advise patients about the lack of evidence of clinical benefit.

References

1. NHS England guidance for CCGs. Conditions for which over the counter items should not be prescribed routinely in primary care. <https://www.engage.england.nhs.uk/consultation/over-the-counter-items-not-routinely-prescribed/>
2. UK Medicines Information. Probiotics VSL#3 and Vivomixx have been removed from the Drug Tariff, following review by Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances (ACBS). <https://www.medicinesresources.nhs.uk/en/Medicines-Awareness/Guidance-and-Advice/Drug-Prescribing/Probiotics-VSL3-and-Vivomixx-have-been-removed-from-the-Drug-Tariff-following-review-by-Advisory-Committee-on-Borderline-Substances-ACBS-/>