

Dear patient,

## **Eye health checks for people taking hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine**

We are contacting you about eye health checks for people taking the medicines hydroxychloroquine or chloroquine. These are very safe and effective drugs but, like all medicines, they can cause side effects.

It is known that some people who take chloroquine for more than 1 year or hydroxychloroquine for more than 5 years are at increased risk of damage to their retina, the light sensitive layer of cells at the back of the eye. This is known as retinal toxicity or retinopathy. Risks may also be increased if you take a high dose, have reduced kidney function or also take tamoxifen.

For this reason, the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust (RCHT) offers patients taking these medications long term regular eye health checks to screen for signs of retinopathy. The aim of screening is not to prevent retinopathy, but to detect the earliest signs of it before you notice any symptoms.

You are prescribed one of these medications, so we have referred you into the retinopathy screening programme run by the RCHT. You should receive a routine appointment for an eye assessment in due course.

The service provides an annual screen for patients who have been taking chloroquine for over 1 year or hydroxychloroquine for over 5 years. Sometimes, for patients on hydroxychloroquine with a higher risk of retinopathy, you may be referred earlier than 5 years for screening. At these appointments, a number of photographs and scans will be taken of your retina to assess your eye health. Monitoring your eyes in this way helps to detect very early signs of damage to the retina.

It is very important that you attend all your screening appointments. If you cannot attend on a given day, please contact the eye department using the telephone number on your letter to make an alternative appointment as soon as possible.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your surgery.

Yours,