

# Memo

Date: 23 February 2015

From: Lesley Smith, Chief Pharmacist

To: All MHS Consultants  
All MHS NMP

Cc: Pharmacy team  
Dr H Ticehurst

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**By email**

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**Re: Trust use and recommendation of quetiapine XL**

Generic quetiapine is available in two dosage forms: quetiapine immediate release and quetiapine modified release (XL).

There is a significant cost difference between the two formulations and there is scope to achieve substantial cost savings across the mental health economy by changing from XL to IR. **The attached briefing provides a comparison of quetiapine costs.**

The pharmacokinetics of the two formulations are similar and there is very little difference in terms of side effects between quetiapine IR and quetiapine XL.

The Drugs and Therapeutics Committee has approved guidelines for the use of quetiapine (attached) which state that:

- the IR formulation must be routinely prescribed and recommended for use
- the XL formulation must be reserved for rapid treatment initiation
- **in-patients initiated on quetiapine XL should have the formulation reviewed during the inpatient stay and be discharged on quetiapine IR.**

**From receipt of this memorandum would all prescribers please ensure that:**

- **quetiapine XL is only used for inpatients for a maximum of 3 days after which quetiapine IR is used**
- **General Practitioners are not asked to prescribe the quetiapine XL unless there is a compelling clinical reason to do so and the reason is clearly communicated**
- **If adherence to a twice daily treatment regime with quetiapine IR is a problem then a once daily regime using IR is considered.**

All medicines prescribed in the Trust (on inpatient charts, out-patient prescriptions, FP10 and 'Non urgent advice letters') are closely monitored and quetiapine formulations are no exception. Use of quetiapine XL has continued to rise despite Trust guidelines being issued and this has resulted in a larger Trust spend and mental health economy spend on quetiapine than necessary.

Please would you share this information with all members of your team and don't hesitate to speak to your locality pharmacist for further help or advice in individual cases.

**Lesley Smith**  
**Chief Pharmacist**