

From The Chief Medical Officer:
Dr Henrietta Campbell CB

Castle Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
Belfast BT4 3SJ

Telephone: 028 90520563
Fax: 028 90520574

E-Mail: henrietta.campbell@dhsspsni.gov.uk

HSS (MD)14/2001

To: All General Practitioners
Directors of Public Health in HSS Boards
Medical Directors of HSS Trusts
Directors of Nursing in HSS Boards
Directors of Nursing in HSS Trusts
GP Advisers in HSS Boards
Prescribing Advisers in HSS Boards

11 May 2001

Dear Colleague

**WITHDRAWAL OF ANORECTIC AGENTS/APPETITE
SUPPRESSANTS: AMFEPRAMONE (DIETHYLPROPION,
TENUATE DOSPAN) AND PHENTERMINE (DUROMINE,
IONAMIN).**

Attached is a copy of a fax, sent by the Medicines Control Agency, to general practitioners in the United Kingdom. It provides prescribing advice on anorectic agents/appetite suppressants following withdrawal of the licences for the above products on 11 May 2001. It is planned that withdrawal will be completed within 30 days from this date.

Directors of pharmaceutical services, community pharmacists and dispensing doctors have already received a communication to this effect. Private slimming clinics have also been informed.

Yours sincerely

DR HENRIETTA CAMPBELL
Chief Medical Officer





Dear General Practitioner,

10 May 2001

European withdrawal of anorectic agents/appetite suppressants: new legal developments, no new safety issues:

Licences for phentermine and amfepramone being withdrawn: May 2001.

This fax is for information only and is only relevant to general practitioners who have patients currently taking the following appetite suppressants: Ionamin (phentermine) and Diethylpropion (amfepramone).

A Europe-wide review of the risks and benefits of anorectic agents/appetite suppressants led to the withdrawal of their licences in April 2000 following a European Commission Decision. Following an appeal by some of the licence holders, the effects of the Commission's decisions were suspended and the licences for amfepramone and phentermine were re-instated in April and August 2000 respectively. The suspension of the decisions has now been set aside by the European courts and the licences for these drugs must be withdrawn again in the European Union. In the UK, the relevant licences will be revoked from 11 May 2001 and most patients should be withdrawn from these medicines by 10 June 2001.

Prescribing advice

- Dosage reduction of phentermine or amfepramone should be gradual, over at least 2 weeks to reduce the risk of withdrawal symptoms.
- Following abrupt discontinuation, particularly after long-term use (>3 months) withdrawal reactions may occur. These include: depression, irritability, dizziness and sleep disturbances. Depression may be more likely in patients with a history of such illness. Withdrawal symptoms are usually worst by the 4th day, but may occur later. Symptoms should be treated on an individual basis.

We have sent all the relevant information, including advice sheets for health professionals and patients to slimming clinics. This information can also be found on the MCA website (www.mca.gov.uk).

For further information about this message, contact the Information Centre, Medicines Control Agency: telephone 020 7273 0000.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'June M. Raine'.

Dr JM Raine
Director Post Licensing Division