MEMORANDUM

To: All GPs, District Nurses, Community Pharmacists and Prescribing Support Teams
From: Elayne Harris, Macmillan Lead Pharmacist (Palliative Care)
Date: 10th October 2014
Subject: Dexamethasone injection – change of strength

Dexamethasone 4mg/ml injection (manufactured by Organon) has been discontinued. As an alternative supplier of a 4mg/ml strength injection is not available, NHSGGC is now switching to a 3.3mg/ml strength injection (manufactured by either Hospira or Hameln).

Prescribing
- This change does not require any change to the prescribing of dexamethasone injection, only the volume of the injection administered will change (see below).
- The NHSGGC Palliative Care Guidelines should continue to be used for prescribing advice, as the package insert may not always reflect local practice.
- The new product is not licensed for sub-cutaneous administration. However, as this is a recognised route of administration for dexamethasone, the 3.3mg/ml injection can be administered in this way.
- The oral route should be used wherever possible. The tablets can be dispersed in water if needed.
- Dexamethasone should not routinely be prescribed or administered via continuous subcutaneous infusion, bolus injections should be used in preference.

Administration
This change requires an increased volume of dexamethasone injection to be drawn up – see the table below for some examples of doses used in adult patients:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADULT dose of dexamethasone prescribed</th>
<th>Volume of the Hospira/Hameln brand of dexamethasone 3.3mg/ml injection required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2mg</td>
<td>0.6ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4mg</td>
<td>1.2ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6mg</td>
<td>1.8ml</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8mg</td>
<td>2.4ml (will need to given via 2 sites as the maximum recommended volume for SC bolus injection is 2ml)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the short term, some community pharmacies may stock both the 4mg/ml injection and 3.3mg/ml injection - please read the label carefully, taking note of the strength of the injection, before administering dexamethasone to the patient.

If you have any queries regarding the change above then please contact Elayne Harris (07876 478140), Carolyn Mackay (07775 012560) or Susan Addie (07880 786659).