

ALL WALES PRESCRIBING ADVISORY GROUP (AWPAG)

Minutes of meeting held on

11th December 2024 commencing at 9.30 am

Held at the All Nations Centre, Cardiff and via Teams

Chair – Dr Laurence Gray Consultant Clinical Pharmacologist, Cardiff & Vale UHB

Voting members

Mrs Vicky Allum	Head of Pharmacy, Primary Care and Community Services, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Mrs Dianne Burnett	National Lead, Medicines Information
Mrs Clare Clement	Lead Pharmacist for Primary, Community and Intermediate Care, Cardiff & Vale UHB
Ms Helen Davies	Principal Pharmacist for Medicines Optimisation in Primary Care – Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
Mrs Sarah Davies	Senior Lecturer Advanced Clinical Practice, Swansea University
Dr Jennifer Ellis	General Practitioner, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Mrs Sian Evans	Consultant in Public Health - Public Health Wales
Mrs Elizabeth Hallett	Pharmacist – Aneurin Bevan UHB
Ms Hazel Hopkins	Prescribing Support Pharmacist, Hywel Dda UHB
Dr Lynette James	All Wales Consultant Pharmacist – Acute Care & Medication Safety
Mrs Sue Knights	ABPI representative
Mr Malcolm Latham	Lay member
Mr Usman Malik	Principal Pharmacist - Velindre NHS Trust
Mr Jonathan Smith	Community Pharmacist
Ms Bethan Thain	Pharmacist, Swansea Bay UHB
Mrs Fiona Woods	Lay member

In attendance (non-voting)

Ms Joe Castle	ABPI
Mr Michael Clarke	BGMA
Dr Rob Bracchi	AWTTC Medical Advisor
Mrs Claire Thomas	AWTTC Head of WAPSU and Medicines Optimisation
Dr Tom Curran	AWTTC Principal Scientist
Mr Richard Boldero	AWTTC WAPSU Pharmacist
Dr Paul Deslandes	AWTTC WAPSU Pharmacist
Mrs Karen Jones	AWTTC Senior Pharmacist
Ms Shaila Ahmed	AWTTC Senior Pharmacist
Dr Katherine Chaplin	AWTTC Scientist
Dr Carolyn Hughes	AWTTC Medical Writer
Mrs Siân Harbon	AWTTC Medical Writer
Mr David Haines	AWTTC Medical Writer

Observing

Mrs Jessica Morgan	AWTTC Communications Manager
Ms Louise Manousos	Alternate pharmacist member for Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
Ms Jacqueline Price	Alternate Nurse Member

External presenters

Dr Craig Holley and Dr Fiona Brennan	Policy for the sustainable procurement, management, administration and disposal of medical gases to achieve decarbonisation	7.1
Ms Meryl Davies	Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidelines (minor updates)	7.2

Key of abbreviations

ABPI	Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
AWMSG	All Wales Medicines Strategy Group
AWPAG	All Wales Prescribing Advisory Group
AWTTC	All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre
BGMA	British Generic Manufacturers Association
BMI	Body Mass Index
CAS	Common Ailments Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NPIs	National Prescribing Indicators
OME	Oral Morphine Equivalence
PHW	Public Health Wales
SPIRA	Server for Prescribing Information Reporting and Analysis
SSRI	Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors
THB	Teaching Health Board
UHB	University Health Board
WAPSU	Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit
WMAS	Welsh Medicines Advice Service

1.0 Welcome and introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance, in person and virtually. The Chair welcomed Ms Louise Manousas, alternate pharmacy member for Cwm Taff Morgannwg and Ms Jacqueline Price, alternate nurse member, who were observing their first meeting.

2.0 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Mr Paul Fleming BGMA

3.0 Declarations of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement

The Chair asked members to declare any interests relevant to the meeting; none were given that were pertinent to the agenda.

4.0 Chair's report

Membership

The Chair reminded members that there are currently vacancies for doctors for Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, Swansea Bay UHB and Powys THB, along with a doctor member from Velindre NHS Trust. Members were asked to forward nominations to AWTTC and members were informed that an advert had recently been circulated. The Chair thanked Ms Sophie Harding (alternative pharmacy member from Velindre) for her contributions as she had recently resigned from AWPAG.

The Chair thanked Dr Rob Bracchi for his service as a long-standing member of AWPAG and AWTTC, as this was his last meeting due to retirement. The Chair and members wished Dr Bracchi a happy and healthy retirement.

5.0 Minutes of previous AWPAG meeting – 18th September 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were checked for accuracy and agreed.

6.0 Feedback from AWMSG – 8th October, 6th November and 3rd December 2024

Members were provided with feedback from the most recent AWMSG meetings:

For endorsement

- Prescribing of branded generics in NHS Wales – Position Statement
- Prescribing Dilemmas: Sharing responsibility for prescribing between a private clinician and an NHS prescriber
- National Prescribing Indicators 2025–2028
- National Prescribing Indicators 2025–2028 – Supporting information for prescribers and healthcare professionals
- Initial clinical management of nicotine withdrawal in adults in secondary care

For information

- AWPAG Constitution
- Pharmacotherapy for smoking cessation (minor updates)
- National Prescribing Indicators 2024–2025: Analysis of Prescribing Data to June 2024
- NPIs 2024–2025: A focus on total opioid burden
- NHS Wales inhaler carbon footprint report – August 2024
- All Wales Common Ailments Service Formulary (minor updates)
- Prescribing Dilemmas – A guide for prescribers (minor updates)

Dr Katherine Chaplin provided members with more detail regarding the NPIs 2024–2025: A focus on total opioid burden, including an overview of the oral morphine equivalent indicator, and initial findings from the data. Members discussed examples of good practice in relation to opioid prescribing, the potential value of including data on waiting times (e.g. surgical, physiotherapy) where possible, and data sources.

7.0 Documents for discussion

7.1 Policy for the sustainable procurement, management, administration and disposal of medical gases to achieve decarbonisation

Mr Richard Boldero, Dr Fiona Brennan and Dr Craig Holley presented an overview of the policy. The presenters stated that other similar projects were underway elsewhere, and these plans were supported by field experts. Members were invited to comment on the policy, and to decide whether the document should proceed to consultation.

Members were supportive of the plan and thanked all involved for the work that had gone into the project so far. There was some discussion on whether the wording of the policy was strong enough in setting out the aim to decommission piped gasses, and it was felt that some changes could be made to make this

clearer. It was also agreed that it should be made clearer that the scope of the policy is limited to hospital settings. Members also queried what the potential impacts might be on patients and the service when switching to a bottled gas supply, and were assured that the impacts are expected to be minimal.

Members were informed of plans to create a SPIRA dashboard hosted by AWTTTC which will be used to support monitoring of the policy after implementation.

Action: Document to be amended based on member feedback and proceed to consultation

7.2 Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidelines (minor updates)

Mrs Meryl Davies and Mrs Siân Harbon provided members with an overview of updates to the Primary Care Antimicrobial Guidelines in the oral candidiasis section. Members were asked to consider if these changes could be approved as 'minor', or should be classed as 'major', requiring a consultation. Members felt some of the wording around treatment durations could cause confusion among prescribers and patients, and discussed alternative phrasing that could be used instead. There was also discussion around how best to include warnings to check for serious interactions for patients taking other medicines.

Members were supportive of the updates, with some amendments agreed upon.

Members were also notified of a correction made to the document the previous week regarding the influenza section where a symbol was changed from 'more than' to 'more than or equal to' a BMI of 40.

Action: Minor updates to be published after agreed amendments have been made, followed by presentation at AWMSG for information

7.3 All Wales Common Ailments Service Formulary (minor updates)

Mrs Dianne Burnett and Ms Shaila Ahmed presented members with a series of updates to the All Wales Common Ailments Service (CAS) Formulary. Updates had been made to the allergic rhinitis, conjunctivitis and sore throat monographs, members were asked to consider in each case if these changes could be approved as 'minor', or should be classed as 'major', requiring a consultation.

Allergic rhinitis

Members were informed that this monograph had been updated to include the addition of fexofenadine and redesigned based on feedback from service users. The referral tables and treatment/formulary information were also revised for improved clarity. Members felt that some of the changes constituted a significant update and there were several issues raised around the role of optometrists in the updated monograph. Members felt these changes required greater scrutiny, and agreed the updates should be classed as 'major' and therefore go out to consultation.

Action: Document to be amended then to proceed to consultation

Conjunctivitis

Members were informed of the changes to this monograph. Members discussed the wording around people who are pregnant or breastfeeding, and whether optometrist referral was the most appropriate pathway for them. Suggested changes to the wording were discussed and agreed upon. Members agreed that the conjunctivitis updates could be classed as 'minor'.

Action: Minor updates to be published after agreed amendments have been made, followed by presentation at AWMSG for information

Sore throat

Members were informed of the changes to the sore throat monograph, including the antibiotic decision pathway updated to reflect advice that clarithromycin can be used in breastfeeding. Members raised concerns about the wording regarding when to refer cases of coughing up blood, suggesting it should be clarified. It was considered significant to remove the symptomatic treatment for children under 5 years from the monograph. Members agreed that the sore throat updates should be classed as 'major' and require consultation.

Please note: Following the meeting it has been noted that the change in treatment age was due to the new service specification for the 2024-2025 iteration of CAS, where the Sore Throat Test and Treat service is now a mandatory element. Changes in the CAS service specification sit outside the remit of AWPAG. Therefore, it has been agreed with the Chair that the remaining clinical changes within the monograph are considered minor, will be confirmed by Chair's action, and will not proceed to consultation.

Action: Minor updates to be published after agreed amendments have been made and confirmed by Chair's action, followed by presentation at AWMSG for information

Mrs Burnett and Ms Ahmed also presented a verbal update to the nappy rash monograph following the discontinuation of Metanium nappy rash ointment. This change was agreed by members.

Action: Minor update to be published followed by presentation at AWMSG for information

7.4 Managing medicines shortages in Wales: Information for patients

Mr Richard Boldero and Dr Carolyn Hughes presented members with a revised patient information leaflet following consultation. Members were asked if this resource should proceed to AWMSG.

Mr Boldero explained the changes and this was accompanied by a demonstration by Dr Carolyn Hughes of a webpage, still in the development phase, to be hosted on the AWTTTC website. It was agreed that the link to the webpage would be circulated in order for members to provide feedback.

Members discussed how the leaflet could be used alongside other resources during shortages, such as NHS 111. Members agreed that decisions on producing versions of the leaflet in languages other than English or Welsh

would be taken by each health board, based on local need.

Some minor wording changes were agreed upon, and members discussed the best ways of promoting this resource.

Action: Patient information leaflet to proceed to AWMSG for endorsement. AW TTC to circulate link to draft webpage to members.

7.5 Urgent Requests for Repeat Medication – Guidance for NHS 111 and out-of-hours primary care services

Dr Paul Deslandes and Dr Lynette James provided members with an overview of the guidance document, which had been developed at the request of NHS 111. The guidance is intended to be used by NHS 111 when receiving out of hours requests for repeat medication.

Discussion took place regarding the practicalities of the guidance, and how NHS 111 operators would deal with patients asking for medicines that are only available from hospitals, are restricted, or when the patient doesn't know what their medicine is called. Members raised questions about treatment gaps, access to patient records, and specialist medicines (e.g. cancer treatments) not routinely available from community pharmacy. Members also felt that the role of community pharmacists in providing the emergency medicines supply service should be clarified.

Action: Document to be updated before proceeding to consultation

7.6 Variation in prescribing

Mr Richard Boldero presented members with data from the variation in prescribing paper, and explained how to interpret the data along with some aims regarding how it could be used. Members were invited to comment before the document proceeds to AWMSG for information.

Discussion focused on the link between prescribing variation and deprivation rates across Wales. The nuances of how to read this data appropriately were discussed.

Members agreed that the way this data is presented will be very important to avoid it being taken out of context, and discussed how this might be done. It was also felt that the addition of a glossary to aid interpretation would be useful.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG for information

8.0 Acknowledgements

8.1 All Wales Guidance on Flushing Intravenous Administration Lines in Adults

Dr Thomas Curran and Dr Lynette James provided members with details of this guidance, and members were asked to consider if acknowledgement by AWMSG would be appropriate.

After discussion, members agreed that the paper could proceed to be considered for AWMSG Acknowledgement.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG for Acknowledgement

8.2 Guidance for Clinicians on Prescribing Antidepressants in the Perinatal Period and Patient poster on sources of support if planning a pregnancy, pregnant or have a baby and taking any medications for mental health

Dr Thomas Curran provided members with details of this guidance and members were asked to consider if acknowledgement by AWMSG would be appropriate.

Members suggested that a definition of 'severe mental illness' could be included and there could be more consistency in the use of terms around antipsychotics and psychotropics. It was also suggested that a link to the WMAS website could be included as a useful resource.

After discussion, members agreed that the paper could proceed to be considered for AWMSG Acknowledgement.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG for Acknowledgement

9.0 Best Practice Day

Mrs Claire Thomas informed members of the next Best Practice Day, planned for 2025. Members were invited to suggest ideas for themes or content to consider for the day and were asked to express their interest should they wish to help shape the event.

Action: Members to contact AWTTTC if they wish to contribute to the event planning

10.0 Verbal Updates

10.1 All Wales Medicine Management Guidelines for Integrated Community Based Services

Mrs Karen Jones gave an update on progress with this document following the previous AWPAG meeting. Emyr Jones (Consultant Pharmacist, Cardiff and Vale UHB) is consulting with the All Wales Heads of Adult Services on a version of the document that has been revised following consultation. The document is aiming to return to AWPAG in March 2025.

10.2 SPIRA Steering Committee feedback

Mr Richard Boldero presented feedback from the most recent SPIRA Steering Committee meeting. Training for SPIRA was discussed and members were encouraged to make further suggestions to AWTTTC.

10.3 NHS Wales inhaler carbon footprint report – data to August 2024

Mr Richard Boldero presented the latest inhaler carbon footprint report data. He also mentioned the recently published asthma guidelines from NICE, and assured members that AWTTTC were checking the AWMSG asthma guidelines for alignment.

10.4 Your Medicines, Your Health

Mrs Claire Thomas provided members with an update on progress with Your Medicines, Your Health. The first meeting of the strategic board will take place in February with the aim of developing a strategy. Members will be kept informed of progress with this.

10.5 Review of AWMSG-endorsed medicines optimisation documents

Dr Thomas Curran provided an update on AWMSG documents for review, and confirmed that the previously discussed warfarin guidance would be retired following advice from Welsh Government.

10.6 Gabapentinoids Task Force

Ms Shaila Ahmed informed members that AWTTTC had established a multidisciplinary task force to address the rise in gabapentinoid prescriptions. An update will be given at the March 2025 meeting of AWPAG.

10.7 All Wales Shared Care Framework

Ms Shaila Ahmed gave an update on progress with the shared care framework. A draft framework is due to be presented at the March 2025 meeting of AWPAG.

10.8 Learning at Lunch – 4 February 2025

Mrs Siân Harbon shared details of the next Learning at Lunch meeting to be held on the 4th February 2025. Members and colleagues can register via the AWTTTC website.

10.9 AWTTC website – Sodium valproate information hub

Dr Thomas Curran provided an update on the sodium valproate hub, which has now been launched and is live on the AWTTTC website. The hub contains information for clinicians and patients on the safe use of valproate in women and girls.

10.10 Research paper – Patient outcome following selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor prescribing in primary care in Wales

Ms Shaila Ahmed provided details of this recently published research paper, which investigated prescribing patterns of two cohorts of patients treated with SSRIs in primary care in Wales, to better understand drivers for increased usage.

11.0 Feedback from the All Wales Directors of Pharmacy

Dr Laurence Gray presented feedback on behalf of Hannah Wilton, Director of Pharmacy for Cwm Taf Morgannwg, including an update on Transforming Access to Medicines (TrAMs); implementation of electronic prescribing in secondary care, and a review of the self-medication policy across Wales, to support re-ablement.

12.0 Feedback from Health Boards and Velindre NHS Trust

Representatives from Betsi Cadwaladr, Aneurin Bevan and Cardiff & Vale health boards discussed some developments in prescribing since the publication of the Branded generics position statement.

13.0 Feedback from Public Health Wales

Mrs Sian Evans provided feedback from Public Health Wales. Ongoing work on long term public health interventions, sustainability, emergency management and inequalities within GP clusters was described in addition to highlighting Healthcare Public Health.

It was highlighted that work on inhalers in Wales was discussed at a recent national meeting.

14.0 Any other business

A point was raised regarding issues with short interval prescribing and how the introduction of the Electronic Prescription Service (EPS) makes this difficult to manage within community pharmacies. Members noted that the next meeting of the EPS board meeting was due to take place shortly, and this issue should be raised with DHCW. It was suggested that AWTTC could develop some materials to highlight specific pieces of work that could be implemented when practices are switching to EPS.

A recent letter and leaflet from the National Pathology Programme, to health board Chief Executives was highlighted. This highlighted the issue regarding a patient's responsibility to pay for diagnostic tests when undergoing private diagnoses or treatment. It was queried whether the Prescribing Dilemmas document should refer to this.

Action: AWTTC to review

The Chair closed the meeting, thanked all for attending and wished everyone a happy Christmas.

15.0 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 19th March 2025