

ALL WALES PRESCRIBING ADVISORY GROUP (AWPAG)

**Minutes of meeting held on
18th September 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 Sian Evans	Public Health Wales
Dr Jennifer Ellis	General Practitioner, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Ms Hazel Hopkins	Prescribing Support Pharmacist, Hywel Dda UHB
Mrs Clare Clement	Vale Locality Lead Pharmacist, Cardiff & Vale UHB
Mrs Elizabeth Hallett	Pharmacist, Aneurin Bevan UHB
Mr Usman Malik	Pharmacist, Velindre NHS Trust
Mrs Dianne Burnett	National Lead for Medicines Advice
Mr Malcolm Latham	Lay member
Ms Rachel Jenkins	ABPI Wales
Ms Cassandra Edgar	Clinical Effectiveness Lead Pharmacist, P&C Care, Betsi Cadwaladr UHB
Mr Daniel Hallett	Community Pharmacist
Dr Rick Greville	Director ABPI Wales (left meeting at 11.30 am)

In attendance (non-voting)

Dr Rob Bracchi	AWTTC Medical Advisor
Mrs Ruth Lang	AWTTC Liaison Manager
Mrs Claire Thomas	AWTTC Head of WAPSU and Medicines Optimisation
Dr Paul Deslandes	AWTTC WAPSU Pharmacist
Dr Thomas Curran	AWTTC Principal Scientist
Mrs Karen Jones	AWTTC Senior Pharmacist
Ms Shaila Ahmed	AWTTC Senior Pharmacist
Mr Richard Boldero	AWTTC Senior Pharmacist
Ms Chrissie Collier	AWTTC Scientist
Dr Katherine Chaplin	AWTTC Scientist
Dr Carolyn Hughes	AWTTC Medical Writer
Mr David Haines	AWTTC Medical Writer
Dr Sara Pickett	AWTTC Principal Health Economist
Mrs Jessica Morgan	AWTTC Communications Manager

Observing

Mr Emlyn Pritchard Alternate member for Powys THB nominee

External presenters

Mr Emyr Jones	Consultant Pharmacist, Cardiff & Vale UHB	7.1
Ms Victoria Richards-Green	Clinical Informatics and Prescribing Support Lead Pharmacist, Aneurin Bevan UHB	7.3 and 7.4

Key of abbreviations

ABPI	Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry
AWMSG	All Wales Medicines Strategy Group
AWTTC	All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre
BGMA	British Generic Manufacturers Association
CAS	Common Ailments Service
DOAC	Direct Oral Anticoagulants
ENDS	Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems
HMQ	Help Me Quit
HMQH	Help Me Quit in Hospital
MHRA	Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency
NPIs	National Prescribing Indicators
NRT	Nicotine Replacement Therapy
PHW	Public Health Wales
PPI	Proton Pump Inhibitors
PU	Prescribing unit
SPIRA	Server for Prescribing Information Reporting and Analysis
SPS	Specialist Pharmacy Services
SSRI	Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors
THB	Teaching Health Board
TrAMS	Transforming Access to Medicines Services
UHB	University Health Board
WAPSU	Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit
4C antimicrobials	Group of antibiotics: co-amoxiclav, cephalosporins, fluoroquinolones and clindamycin.

1.0 Welcome and introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance, in person and virtually. The Chair welcomed Usman Malik as a new member for Velindre NHS Trust, and Dianne Burnett (National Lead for Medicines Advice), a new position on the AWPAG constitution. The Chair also welcomed Emlyn Pritchard, the nominee for alternate member representing Powys Teaching Health Board, who was observing the meeting.

2.0 Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Dr Andy Champion	AWTTC Programme Director
Ms Bethan Thain	Prescribing Advisor, Swansea Bay UHB
Mrs Jacqueline Price	Nurse member
Mrs Sarah Davies	Nurse member
Mrs Eryl Smeethe	Prescribing Advisor, Aneurin Bevan UHB
Mrs Helen Davies	Prescribing Advisor, Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB
Mrs Fiona Woods	Lay member
Ms Jacqueline Seaton	Chief Pharmacist, Powys THB
Mr Andrew Evans	Welsh Government
Mr Jonathan Smith	Community Pharmacist
Dr Gemma Rogers	General Practitioner, Aneurin Bevan UHB
Dr Lynette James	All Wales Medicines Safety Pharmacist
Mr Michael Clarke	BGMA Partnership Director

3.0 Declarations of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement

The Chair asked members to declare any interests relevant to the meeting. A declaration of interest was made by Rachel Jenkins for agenda item 8.0 on 'National Prescribing Indicators', and it was agreed that she would abstain from voting on that item.

4.0 Chair's report

Membership

Members were informed of the resignation of Dr Gemma Rogers, due to a new role. The Chair thanked Dr Rogers for her efforts and valuable input into the group since joining.

The Chair highlighted that Dianne Burnett had been appointed as a new member due to inclusion of her role in the updated AWPAG constitution. It was also noted that Usman Malik has been appointed as a representative for Velindre NHS Trust. The Chair also informed members that Louise Mannousos had been appointed as alternate pharmacy member for Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, and Jacqueline Price had been appointed as alternate nurse member.

The Chair highlighted that there are currently vacancies for doctor members on the group for Cwm Taf Morgannwg UHB, Swansea Bay UHB, Aneurin Bevan UHB and Powys THB, and Velindre NHS Trust. The Chair asked members to contact AWTTC for further information regarding these positions.

The Chair also thanked Rick Greville, who is retiring before the next AWPAG meeting, for his efforts and input over the years.

5.0 Minutes of previous AWPAG meeting – 26th June 2024

Minutes for the previous meeting were checked for accuracy and agreed.

6.0 Feedback from AWMSG – 11th September 2024

Members were provided with feedback from the most recent AWMSG meeting held on the 11th September.

- [National Prescribing Indicators 2023-2024: Analysis of prescribing data to March 2024](#) (and Appendix A: a focus of gabapentin and pregabalin)
 - It was noted that AWMSG had requested a task force to be established to look at the issues regarding the increased prescribing of gabapentinoids, with the aim of developing strategies to support a reduction in prescribing. AWPAG members will be contacted by email in the coming weeks for suggestions regarding membership.
- [NHS Wales inhaler carbon footprint report – May 2024](#)
- Patient information leaflet – Questions to ask your prescriber about antipsychotic medicines
- [Endocrine management of gender incongruence in adults](#) (minor update)
- [Primary care antimicrobial guidelines](#) (minor updates)

7.0 Documents for discussion

7.1 All Wales Medicine Management Guidelines for Integrated Community Based Services

Mr Emyr Jones presented members with an update on the document following a full consultation process. The consultation had only closed recently therefore no changes had been made to the document. Mr Emyr Jones informed members of the themes that had arisen during the consultation. Members were asked for suggestions on how to proceed with amending the document taking the consultation comments into account.

The main theme of discussion centred around the role of the social care sector and local authorities in implementing the guidance, and who should be responsible for medicines management in the community. It was acknowledged that this is a complex issue and that there are currently inconsistencies in Wales in the way this is approached. Local authorities currently feel unable to support the document due to issues around legality and workload.

Members were told that the WG legal team is working on these issues and is hoping to clarify responsibilities. Members acknowledged that this was a complex piece of work and thanked Mr Emyr Jones for his time and efforts.

Action: Mr Emyr Jones to respond to consultation comments in preparation for December AWPAG

7.2 Position Statement – Branded Generic Prescribing in Primary Care

Mrs Claire Thomas provided members with an update on the progress of the document following consultation. Members were asked to decide if the document should proceed to AWMSG for endorsement.

Discussion took place regarding the inclusion of the full list of recommendations from the SPS and MHRA as had been requested at the September meeting.

Members suggested other examples that could also be considered for inclusion, however it was agreed that listing specific examples within the document may not be helpful. Members agreed that links to the relevant pages on the SPS and MHRA websites should be included to ensure that prescribers checked the most up to date information.

A query was raised around how the recommendations in the document will be implemented, and it was suggested that the AWMSG Chair could write to health boards encouraging them to follow the guidance after endorsement.

There was discussion of the potential financial impact of following these recommendations, in particular in the short term, and whether implementation will be able to influence pricing in the longer term if the same position is not taken in England. It was noted that many areas in England had already produced similar guidelines and that a position for the whole of Wales could support colleagues in NHS England take a similar position.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG

7.3 Initial clinical management of nicotine withdrawal in adults in secondary care

Ms Victoria Richards-Green and Mrs Karen Jones presented members with an update on the document following consultation. Members were asked to decide if the document should proceed to AWMSG in November 2024.

It was noted that the updated document presented now addressed the potential unmet need of those who vape or use ENDS and have been admitted to hospital and who require NRT to manage nicotine withdrawal symptoms. It was noted that guidance relating to this had been agreed after consultation by the HMQH Programme Board.

Members noted there were other documents in development covering smoking in secondary care, such as the homely remedy protocol, and it could be amalgamated in the future for simplicity.

Members raised a potential issue whereby patients might collect prescriptions of nicotine withdrawal relief medicines, and discussion was had around the best way to provide these medicines whilst patients are admitted to hospital.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG

7.4 Pharmacotherapy for smoking cessation

Ms Victoria Richards-Green presented an update to the document following changes on the availability of varenicline and new advice on cytisine from AWMSG. Members were asked to consider whether these changes could be considered a 'minor update', or 'major update' which would require consultation.

Members discussed these changes, and it was felt that it was important to ensure that the additional information about vapes/ENDS and tobacco harm reduction approaches was up to date and aligned with information from PHW and HMQ groups. Members were informed that stakeholders such as HMQ were keen to publish the updated guidance as soon as possible, and that these

specialist groups could give feedback on any changes prior to publishing if required.

Members confirmed that the update was considered 'minor', and agreed that the document could be shared with HMQ stakeholders for feedback. Any suggested updates from the HMQ stakeholders would be considered for e-sign off by AWPAG.

Action: Document to be shared with HMQ stakeholder group and any updates considered for e-sign off by AWPAG

7.5 Medicines shortages: Patient information leaflet

Mr Richard Boldero presented members with a summary of the document, and asked members for consideration and comments before proceeding to consultation.

Members identified some formatting and wording issues for amendment prior to consultation, including updating webpage links and the addition of QR codes for ease of use.

Members felt that more clarification should be made on points around advising patients not to stockpile medicines, and there was discussion on whether the term 'healthcare professional' was appropriate to use. It was felt some information on the steps Welsh Government take in response to medicines shortages might be useful to add.

There was some discussion on equality, and members felt that more provision could be made for visually impaired patients, and those for whom Welsh or English is not a first language. The greater disadvantage medicines shortages pose on rural communities was also mentioned.

A suggestion to distribute a video version of the leaflet to be played in GP waiting rooms was discussed.

Action: To update the document before proceeding with consultation

Mrs Vicky Allum joined the meeting at this point, replacing Ms Cassandra Edgar.

7.6 Prescribing Dilemmas: Sharing responsibility for prescribing between a private clinician and an NHS healthcare professional

Dr Paul Deslandes provided members with an update on progress for this document, which had returned with feedback from the AWMSG meeting in May. Members were asked to consider the feedback, and the subsequent changes, before deciding if the document should return to AWMSG.

Members were informed of a recently published document from Northern Ireland which addresses the same subject. In that document, it specifies that prescribers should be registered with the GMC. Members were asked if whether the document should align with this advice. There was a consensus to not specify GMC registrant, and instead use 'relevant professional register' or similar.

A point was raised around the document putting responsibility on individual prescribers, which could lead to inequality as individual prescribers may react to patient situations differently. However, it was noted that this is the same for any shared care agreement.

Members felt that a statement on indemnity should be included to provide more clarity on insurance for prescribers.

Overall members supported the document returning to AWMSG, and the Chair thanked members for their input on this complex issue.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG

8.0 National Prescribing Indicators

Ms Rachel Jenkins sat out of items 8.1 and 8.2

8.1 National Prescribing Indicators 2025-2028

Ms Shaila Ahmed presented a summary of consultation comments received and raised questions that required input from AWPAG members.

A comment had been received suggesting that 1,000 patients was not an ideal measure for the analgesia indicators, and that 1,000 PU would be preferable. Members discussed whether the measure should change to reflect the greater need of older patients for medication. Members commented that elderly patients should be targeted for deprescribing due to increased risks. Members noted the 1,000 patients measure is used in England and felt analgesia prescribing does not correlate well with age and gender. Members agreed to keep the current denominator for analgesia prescribing.

A consultation response questioned whether promethazine should be added to the low value for prescribing basket. Members discussed the proposed low value for prescribing basket for 2025-2028 and agreed that promethazine should not be added. Members also agreed to remove tadalafil from the NPI basket, but to keep it in the low value for prescribing dashboard. The inclusion of ascorbic acid in the NPI low value for prescribing basket was questioned, and it was felt that due to lack of certainty over what conditions it was being prescribed for across Wales, it should not be added.

Members agreed the target for the 4C antimicrobials indicator should apply to both health boards and GP practices.

It was queried whether the prescribing safety indicator related to bleeds (Number of patients with concurrent prescriptions of an oral anticoagulant [warfarin or DOAC] and an SSRI) should be amended to only include patients without risk review and gastroprotection (PPI). Members felt the indicator should not change as a PPI would only reduce the risk of gastrointestinal bleeding but there is still a risk of other types of bleeds e.g. intracranial.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG

8.2 National Prescribing Indicators 2025-2028: Supporting Information for Prescribers and Healthcare Professionals

Ms Shaila Ahmed presented members with an overview of updates to the Supporting Information for Prescribers document. Discussion focused on whether safety indicators used in the current NPIs but being retired for the 2025-2028 will still be monitored. Members were informed that retired indicators will continue to be monitored as local comparators on SPIRA for two years.

Action: To proceed to AWMSG

9.0 Review of AWMSG-endorsed medicines optimisation documents

Dr Thomas Curran presented members with three AWMSG-endorsed medicines optimisation documents that were scheduled for review. Members were asked to determine in each case whether the resource should be retired, kept online as it is, or reviewed. Members were reminded that any retired resource would be retained online with a note, and could be brought back if the service required.

Dry eye syndrome guidance

Members were informed that this guidance has been largely superseded by the Common Ailments Service (CAS), and relevant bodies across Wales have agreed with this. A suggestion to place a link to the CAS on the retired dry eye syndrome guidance webpage was agreed upon.

Action: Resource to be retired

CEPP National Audit for antipsychotics in dementia

The authors of the recent AWMSG endorsed 'All Wales protocol for the appropriate prescribing of antipsychotics for people living with dementia' have agreed that the audit resource does not require updating at this time. AWPAG members agreed to keeping the resource live with a comment stating when this consideration took place.

Action: Resource to be kept live with comment added

Warfarin monitoring

Members were informed that the document had been superseded by more recent national guidance, and reports suggest that it is not in routine use. Members felt that the document should be retired, however it was noted that the national Directed Enhanced Service specification for 'oral anticoagulation warfarin' still references the document. It was agreed to hold off retiring the document and explore the implications of retirement with Welsh Government.

Action: AWTTTC to raise with Welsh Government

10.0 Verbal updates

10.1 SPIRA Steering Committee Feedback

Mr Richard Boldero updated members on the recent SPIRA Steering Committee meeting. The new controlled drugs dashboard was demonstrated, and is now live on SPIRA. A demonstration of an oral morphine equivalent dashboard was also shown. Members were asked for any feedback on how SPIRA training should be prioritised, and were informed of a minor change in

the way SPIRA dashboards are housed on the AWTTTC website.

10.2 Best Practice Day 2024 feedback

Mrs Claire Thomas thanked those AWPAG members who had supported the event by arranging or participating in the breakout sessions. It was noted that feedback from the day was excellent. Suggestions and ideas for the Best Practice Day 2025 will be developed from feedback from the 2024 Best Practice Day and AWPAG members will be invited to share their ideas during December AWPAG. Chair thanked all those who organised the event.

10.3 NHS Wales inhaler carbon footprint report (June)

Mr Richard Boldero provided members with a brief summary of key points from the report. Members suggested that AWTTTC should promote this work more widely due to its success, using social media and newsletters.

There was a query around a perceived lack of progress in the secondary care sector, and discussion around what factors may be influencing this.

11.0 Feedback from the All Wales Chief Pharmacists Group

The Chair spoke on behalf of Ms Jacqui Seaton who had provided the update.

Judith Vincent, Director of Pharmacy SBUHB, has stepped down as Chair. Lois Lloyd, Director of Pharmacy, BCUHB is now Chair with Jonathan Simms, ABUHB as vice chair.

The peer group has reviewed its membership and meeting schedule. Meetings are now held monthly (all-day, face to face/hybrid) rather than weekly.

The Director of Pharmacy sub-groups have been reviewed, aligning them to the Pharmacy Delivering a Healthier Wales themes. This work will be progressed over the coming months.

In April the Director of Pharmacy peer group held a meeting in Cardiff with all of the Health Board Heads of Primary Care Medicines Management to get an understanding of the work being undertaken by each health board, to share learning and get a better understanding of the challenges. Access to data (primary care performance and hospital admissions) was a challenge that was raised by all health boards.

Directors of Pharmacy are now invited to 'Team Wales' meetings following discussions with NHS Confed.

Work is progressing with delivering the recommendations from the Independent Review of Clinical Pharmacy Services at NHS Wales Hospitals – leads for each of the areas have been identified and a work plan is in place.

The Directors of Pharmacy are continuing to work in collaboration with Directors of Finance to address the financial challenge. Quarterly Value and Sustainability Highlight Reports are provided by health boards to the Joint Pharmacy & Finance Group.

Progress is being made with the implementation of the Blueteq high cost drug system. Information governance and cyber issues have now been addressed. Health boards are in the process of approving their Data Protection Impact Assessments. Once approved, the system will be rolled out across Wales – starting with rheumatology drugs.

12.0 Feedback from Health Boards and Velindre NHS Trust

No feedback was given.

13.0 Feedback from Public Health Wales

Ms Sian Evans provided members with an update on the work of Public Health Wales, including a focus on environmentally sustainable healthcare and prevention work on diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and addressing future public health issues.

14.0 Any other business (Chair to have been informed prior to the meeting)

Ms Shaila Ahmed informed members of minor changes to the CAS Formulary for the monographs related to athlete's foot, dry eye, sore throat, and ringworm, for information.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked all for attending.

15.0 Date of next meeting: Wed 11th December 2024