

Prescription statistics

Background

Methadone mixture 1mg/ml is prescribed mainly as an adjunct in the treatment of opiate dependence. Methadone may also be prescribed as a linctus to control distressful cough in terminal illness, and as tablets and injections to control severe pain in terminal illness.

Temazepam and diazepam are prescribed to sedate, induce sleep, and relieve severe anxiety. Dihydrocodeine is used in the relief of moderate to severe pain. Buprenorphine is used for the relief of moderate to severe pain. It has recently been licensed as a substitute in the treatment of opiate dependence.

Defined Daily Doses (DDDs) cited in the following data are considered to be a more accurate index of prescribing volume than volume prescribed alone. A DDD is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the typical adult daily maintenance dose of a drug ¹.

Although DDDs are considered to be superior to items as a unit of comparative analysis, difficulties may arise when they are used in estimating disease prevalence, because they correspond to a drug's principal indication².

Defined Daily Doses used in the production of the following data are based on the WHO Definitions:

Methadone mixture 25mg; Dihydrocodeine 120mg; Buprenorphine 1.2mg; Diazepam 10mg; Temazepam 20mg.

Outline of tables

Table 83 presents data on the number of prescriptions for the named drugs that have been dispensed by each health board per 1 000 population; and in terms of Defined Daily Doses (DDDs) per 1 000 population.

Table 84 presents data (per 1 000 population), for the years 1992/93 to 1999/00, on prescriptions dispensed and defined daily doses of the drugs dispensed.

Table 85 presents data on the number and rate per 1 000 population of prescriptions for methadone mixture dispensed in each health board for the years 1996/97 - 1999/00. The rate of prescribing methadone mixture has increased steadily over the last four years. In 1999/00, there were 47 prescriptions of methadone mixture per 1 000 population; this compares to 30 prescriptions per 1 000 population in 1996/97.

Tables 86 and 87 present data on the number of prescriptions where the prescriber requested that the prescription be dispensed in instalments; and prescriptions where the prescriber requested that the total volume be dispensed in a single instalment. The final columns in Table 86 give the percentage of the total number of methadone prescriptions that were dispensed in instalments, for 1999/00 together with a comparison to 1998/99. In Table 87 the final columns give the percentage of the total number of methadone prescriptions that were dispensed on one occasion only, for 1999/00 together with a comparison to 1998/99. Eighty-seven per cent of the total number of methadone prescriptions dispensed in 1999/00 were dispensed in instalments (e.g. in daily doses). Comparing 1999/00 with 1998/99 data, it can be seen that just over half the health boards showed an increase in percentage of instalment prescriptions compared to single dispensings. Dumfries & Galloway, Highland, Lanarkshire and Shetland health boards showed a marked shift towards instalment dispensing.

Instalment dispensings occur where the prescription item is dispensed in more than one instalment (e.g. in daily doses). Single dispensing occurs where the whole of an item is dispensed on one occasion (e.g. multiple doses). Where items are dispensed in instalments the number of dispensings exceeds the number of items, but where items are dispensed singly, the number of dispensings will equal the number of items. For most instalment

prescriptions the quantity per dispensing is equivalent to the daily dose of methadone requested. However, it needs to be recognised that there will be a discrepancy between the actual daily dose and the amounts dispensed by instalment. This is because the two doses for Saturday and Sunday are recorded as one dispensing. Public Holidays also affect the relationship between dose and volume dispensed on an instalment prescription.

Figures for Orkney and Western Isles health boards should be compared with caution, due to the very small numbers involved.

References

- 1 World Health Organisation (WHO) (1991). Guidelines for defined daily doses. WHO Collaborating Centre for Drug Statistics Methodology. Oslo.
- 2 Frischer M, Chapman S (1998) Issues and directions in prescribing analysis. In: Medicines Management. Eds. Panton R, Chapman S. 82-84 BMJ and Ph.Press. London.

83 Prescriptions & defined daily doses per 1 000 population : 1999/00

health board, drug type

	Methadone mixture	Dihydrocodeine	Buprenorphine	Diazepam	Temazepam
<i>Prescription per 1 000 population</i>					
Scotland	47	84	1	133	101
Argyll & Clyde	50	75	2	141	102
Ayrshire & Arran	68	103	1	119	103
Borders	4	69	-	104	113
Dumfries & Galloway	43	86	2	143	115
Fife	28	68	3	111	88
Forth Valley	9	85	1	106	101
Grampian	43	79	2	106	90
Greater Glasgow	96	97	1	170	104
Highland	11	78	2	129	90
Lanarkshire	44	66	2	145	102
Lothian	29	86	1	113	95
Orkney	1	56	3	92	65
Shetland	15	52	4	109	65
Tayside	40	103	1	154	123
Western Isles	-	77	5	128	157
<i>Defined daily doses per 1 000 population</i>					
Scotland	1 190	2 308	24	3 348	2 660
Argyll & Clyde	1 204	1 896	22	3 113	2 614
Ayrshire & Arran	1 290	2 417	24	2 658	2 607
Borders	122	1 574	4	2 156	2 333
Dumfries & Galloway	388	1 934	22	2 798	2 665
Fife	535	1 905	52	2 748	2 101
Forth Valley	290	2 323	17	2 517	2 789
Grampian	1 006	2 104	30	2 784	2 331
Greater Glasgow	2 529	2 481	16	3 829	2 644
Highland	183	1 525	16	2 117	2 000
Lanarkshire	511	1 763	25	3 217	2 805
Lothian	1 453	3 115	29	4 605	2 722
Orkney	7	1 338	33	1 719	1 940
Shetland	228	911	25	1 475	1 056
Tayside	1 224	2 989	18	4 179	3 843
Western Isles	4	1 713	46	2 250	3 449

Source : ISD Scotland (Primary Care Information Unit).

84 | Prescriptions & defined daily doses per 1 000 population : 1992/93 - 1999/00

drug type

	1992/93	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96	1996/97	1997/98	1998/99	1999/00
<i>Prescription per 1 000 population</i>								
Total	362	360	351	332	329	340	346	366
Methadone mixture	12	17	20	24	30	35	39	47
Dihydrocodeine	59	65	66	66	69	74	78	84
Buprenorphine	8	5	4	3	2	2	2	1
Diazepam	93	96	101	105	112	121	125	133
Temazepam	190	177	161	134	116	109	102	101
<i>Defined daily doses per 1 000 population</i>								
Total	8 793	8 810	8 875	8 525	8 497	8 848	8 907	9 530
Methadone mixture	169	259	431	571	709	876	982	1 190
Dihydrocodeine	1 306	1 517	1 632	1 689	1 782	1 927	2 066	2 308
Buprenorphine	92	67	49	38	33	28	25	24
Diazepam	1 988	2 087	2 282	2 494	2 774	3 062	3 114	3 348
Temazepam	5 238	4 880	4 480	3 732	3 199	2 955	2 719	2 660

Source : ISD Scotland (Primary Care Information Unit).

85 | Methadone mixture prescriptions : 1996/97 - 1999/00

health board of prescription, number and rate per 1 000 population

	1996/97		1997/98		1998/99		1999/00	
	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Scotland	162 252	30	188 790	35	211 341	39	240 389	47
Argyll & Clyde	8 088	18	13 637	31	18 099	41	21 216	50
Ayrshire & Arran	12 821	33	21 607	55	23 838	61	25 319	68
Borders	424	4	498	5	492	5	414	4
Dumfries & Galloway	6 546	43	6 221	41	7 097	46	6 323	43
Fife	4 884	14	6 578	19	7 502	21	9 648	28
Forth Valley	2 730	9	2 695	9	2 311	8	2 472	9
Grampian	13 339	24	14 976	28	17 789	33	22 495	43
Greater Glasgow	69 051	69	75 711	77	80 353	82	86 777	96
Highland	1 011	5	989	5	1 516	7	2 347	11
Lanarkshire	10 739	18	12 211	21	17 575	30	24 760	44
Lothian	18 406	23	18 749	23	19 273	24	22 920	29
Orkney	22	1	17	1	17	1	17	1
Shetland	146	6	248	11	382	17	336	15
Tayside	13 854	34	14 491	35	15 093	37	15 339	40
Western Isles	-	-	3	-	4	-	6	-

Source : ISD Scotland (Primary Care Information Unit).

86 Instalment dispensings of methadone mixture : 1999/00

health board of prescribing

	Qty Disp ¹ (a)	No.Disps ² (b)	No. of items ³ (c)	Disps/Item ⁴	Qty per item ⁵	Qty per Disp ⁶	% of total dispensed in instalments ⁷	
							1999/00	1998/99
Scotland	144 368 364	2 185 109	207 916	11	694	66	87	85
Argyll & Clyde	12 425 008	238 804	19 649	12	632	52	93	94
Ayrshire & Arran	10 324 135	122 208	21 050	6	490	84	83	82
Borders	213 553	1 899	314	6	680	112	76	76
Dumfries & Galloway	1 247 660	32 837	5 208	6	240	38	82	75
Fife	4 253 979	85 121	7 871	11	540	50	82	80
Forth Valley	1 896 681	38 605	1 961	20	967	49	79	81
Grampian	12 543 314	210 544	19 902	11	630	60	89	88
Greater Glasgow	55 618 451	910 737	81 278	11	684	61	94	94
Highland	800 513	12 712	1 728	7	463	63	74	62
Lanarkshire	6 495 827	130 918	15 835	8	410	50	64	51
Lothian	27 043 974	240 057	19 153	13	1 412	113	84	85
Orkney	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Shetland	47 397	409	149	3	318	116	44	33
Tayside	11 457 873	160 258	13 818	12	829	71	90	88
Western Isles	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25

- 1 Quantity dispensed in milligrams.
- 2 Number of occasions an item is dispensed.
- 3 Number of prescription items.
- 4 Number of dispensings per item = (b)/(c).
- 5 Quantity per item = (a)/(c).
- 6 Quantity per dispensing = (a)/(b).
- 7 Percentage of total dispensed (singly and in instalments).

Source : ISD Scotland (Primary Care Information Unit).

87 Single dispensings of methadone mixture : 1999/00

health board of prescribing

	Qty Disp ¹ (a)	No.Disps ² (b)	No. of items ³ (c)	Disps/Item ⁴	Qty per item ⁵	Qty per Disp ⁶	% of total dispensed singly ⁷	
							1999/00	1998/99
Scotland	7 443 569	32 473	32 473	1	229	229	14	15
Argyll & Clyde	382 411	1 567	1 567	1	244	244	7	6
Ayrshire & Arran	1 758 909	4 269	4 269	1	412	412	17	19
Borders	30 286	100	100	1	303	303	24	24
Dumfries & Galloway	176 581	1 115	1 115	1	158	158	18	25
Fife	396 433	1 777	1 777	1	223	223	18	20
Forth Valley	113 629	511	511	1	222	222	21	19
Grampian	665 293	2 593	2 593	1	257	257	12	12
Greater Glasgow	1 532 462	5 499	5 499	1	279	279	6	7
Highland	151 783	619	619	1	245	245	26	38
Lanarkshire	687 164	8 925	8 925	1	77	77	36	49
Lothian	1 037 673	3 767	3 767	1	275	275	16	15
Orkney	3 637	17	17	1	214	214	100	100
Shetland	82 050	187	187	1	439	439	56	67
Tayside	422 721	1 521	1 521	1	278	278	10	12
Western Isles	2 540	6	6	1	423	423	100	75

- 1 Quantity dispensed in milligrams.
- 2 Number of occasions an item is dispensed.
- 3 Number of prescription items.
- 4 Number of dispensings per item = (b)/(c).
- 5 Quantity per item = (a)/(c).
- 6 Quantity per dispensing = (a)/(b).
- 7 Percentage of total dispensed (singly and in instalments).

Source : ISD Scotland (Primary Care Information Unit).