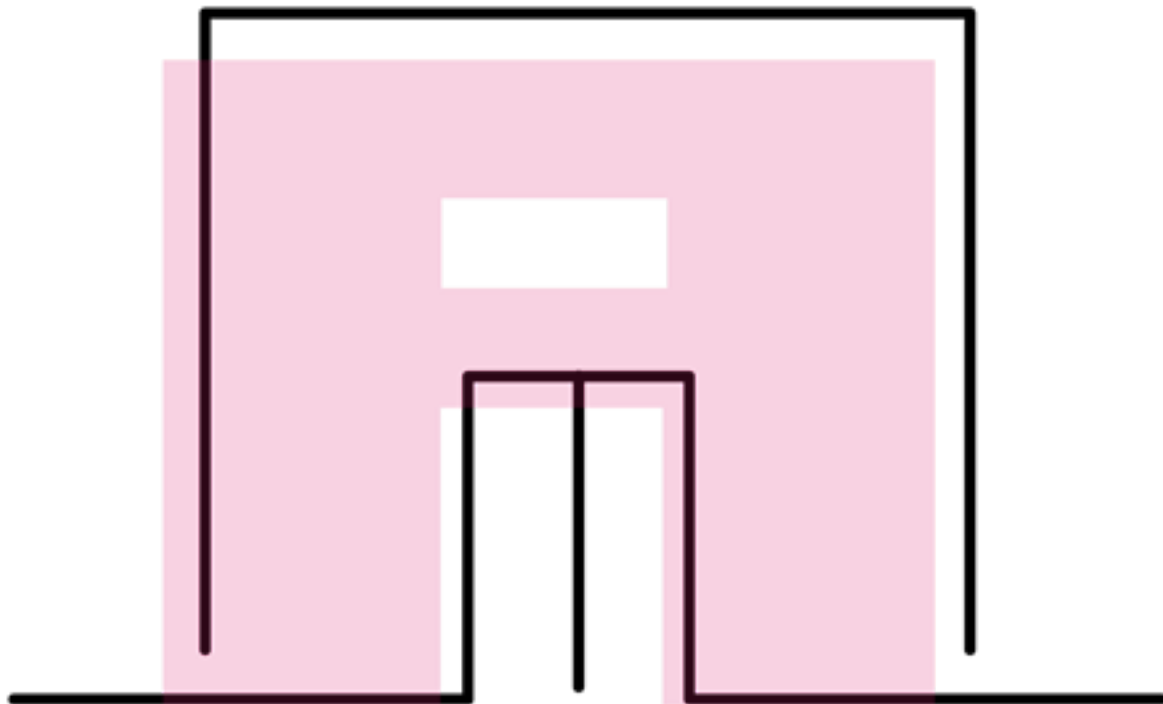


## Duty of care when test results and drugs are ordered by secondary care

Guidance for GPs on duty of care communicating test results and who is responsible for communication when secondary care doctors recommend drugs for your patient.

📍 Location: England • Wales    👤 Audience: GPs • Practice managers    📅 Updated: Monday 7 September 2020



In some areas, hospital doctors have been instructing GPs to find out the test results which the hospital had ordered.

Both the BMA general practitioners committee and consultants committee agree this practice is potentially unsafe. The responsibility for ensuring that results are acted upon rests with the person requesting the test.

That responsibility can only be given to someone else if they accept by prior agreement.

Handover of responsibility has to be a joint consensual decision between hospital team and GP. If the GP hasn't accepted that role, the person requesting the test must retain responsibility.

## Duty of care for drugs recommended from outpatients

We would strongly recommend that LMCs and trusts agree policies that are publicised and adhered to by all parties. These policies should include the following general principles:

- ✔ Drugs required for urgent administration should be prescribed by the hospital doctor, and if appropriate dispensed by the hospital.
- ✔ Responsibility for the provision of a prescription for non-urgent medications should be determined and agreed locally. It must be recognised that delegation of responsibility for prescribing from hospital to GP can only take place with prior agreement.
- ✔ All communications should be in writing with the responsible doctor identified.
- ✔ Where communications are sent via the patient, there should be clear instructions to the patient regarding the time scale for completion of the prescription, and this should be in addition to formal communication.
- ✔ The doctor recommending a prescription should ensure that the prescription is appropriate, including carrying out any tests required to ensure safety.
- ✔ The doctor should tell the patient about important side effects and precautions, including any need for ongoing monitoring, which if needed should be agreed between primary and secondary care clinicians.
- ✔ Recommendations should be in line with any agreed local formularies. Individual decisions should be made about recommending a drug as opposed to a therapeutic class.
- ✔ Where a GP feels that a prescription recommendation is inappropriate, the secondary care clinician should be informed.
- ✔ All prescribers must be aware that the ultimate responsibility for the prescription lies with the prescribing doctor and cannot be delegated.

## Resources

- [NHS England - standards for communication of test results on discharge](#)

## You might also be interested in

### Pushing back on workload from secondary care

The NHS standard contract 2017-19 has put requirements on hospitals to shift workload onto GP practices. We provide guidance on this and letters you can use if you need to take action.

10 March 2022

### General practitioners committee

9 June 2022



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