

Shared Care and Prescribing for Gender Incongruence

Introduction

Issues have been raised nationally regarding the management of patients who present at their general practice with gender identity problems, including questions relating to patient records and confidentiality and prescribing.

At Shore we wish to provide a patient centered approach offering support to all patients addressing issues relating to gender incongruence. At the same time, we feel there is a need for a balance between what can justifiably be expected of GPs providing Primary Medical Services to patients with gender incongruence, any enhanced services which can be provided in primary care, and the knowledge and expertise which should rightly remain within the remit of specialist services.

This policy aims to explain what will be provided at the Practice with regard to the support, referral, prescribing and monitoring in relation to the gender reassignment process.

Our aim is to ensure a safe and high-quality service provision for all patients.

Background

Patients with gender incongruence require a holistic approach, addressing their general physical health and psychological needs, in addition to their physical and psychological response to any specialist treatment. The practice wishes to provide high quality supportive care for all patients but has significant concerns about prescribing and the potential for this to have broader implications beyond the scope of primary health care in the treatment of transgender patients. There is no specialist knowledge within the GP team with regard to ongoing prescribing.

Confidentiality and Medical Records

All practice staff receive training in trans-awareness as part of their equality and diversity education, and will respect the dignity of patients with respect to pronouns and gender-markers on communications. A person's gender past will not be divulged to anyone without the patient's consent, and particular care will be taken over electronic forms of communication, such as e-referrals, which might make reference to past medical history which is of no relevance to the current medical situation.

Shore Medical incorporating; Heatherview Medical Centre, Lilliput Surgery, Parkstone Tower Practice, Poole Road Surgery and Wessex Road Surgery providing comprehensive primary care and integrated services, to improve patients' healthcare across the Poole Bay area.

Prescribing, monitoring and follow-up before, during and after gender reassignment treatment

GPs nationally are being asked to prescribe hormonal treatments for patients with gender incongruence both before and after specialist involvement, including patients who have fully transitioned and those who have been provided with a new NHS number.

The circumstances in which GPs may be requested to prescribe for patients with gender incongruence include “bridging prescriptions” and “ongoing care following consultation at a Gender Identity Clinic”. These requests may come from the NHS or private providers. In both cases the GP would be responsible for any prescription they sign. Patient initiated requests for specific treatment cannot be supported and the patient will be advised to contact their specialist.

Participating in a shared care agreement is voluntary, subject to a GP’s personal competence, and requires the agreement of all parties.

Following review of all the available guidance the Practice has agreed on a policy to support patients presenting with gender identity issues by providing monitoring of their physical and psychological health and providing results of investigations or other medical records as required.

Due to the specialist nature of prescribing and monitoring of hormonal medication for gender reassignment, the practice will only provide shared care prescribing of medications when working closely with registered specialist clinics commissioned by NHS England. The practice cannot initiate treatment or provide bridging prescriptions.

The practice lacks specialist expertise in gender reassignment and therefore does not provide shared care prescribing for private providers requesting shared care with NHS primary care providers. Prescribing initiation, titration and renewal will, therefore, remain the responsibility of the private provider that has taken on the responsibility for care.

All patients presenting with requests for shared care with a private provider will, if requested, be referred to the NHS Gender Identity Service.

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