

Position Statement: Use of Medicine Exemptions for annotated Orthoptists

This position statement is provided to navigate the complexities surrounding the use of Medicine Exemptions as outlined in the UK legislation.

Introduction:

The British and Irish Orthoptic Society (BIOS) is dedicated to promoting and advancing the field of Orthoptics, ensuring the highest standards of patient care and professional practice.

Orthoptists have a crucial role in the delivery of healthcare services within the National Health Service (NHS). Despite this, registrants are experiencing difficulties in getting Medicine Exemptions recognised by their local pharmacy departments and are being requested to provide additional policies and directives in order to work under this framework.

Legal Framework:

The **Human Medicines Regulations 2012** provide a comprehensive framework that governs the use and administration of medicines. Within these regulations, exemptions are specified under **Schedule 17**, which empower certain registered professionals to sell, supply, and administer specific medications without the need for a prescription. Orthoptists are recognised under this framework following an update to The **Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2016** under Schedule 17.

Position Statement:

BIOS strongly advocates for the autonomous use of Medicine Exemptions by Orthoptists within the scope of their clinical practice. The legislation does not specify that further training or competencies are required once annotated and registrants should not be asked to supply these or write them.

A Patient Group Direction (PGD) should not be utilised when a medicine exemption exists. Instead, Orthoptists are able to sell, supply and administer all listed Prescription Only Medicines (POM), and all Pharmacy (P), and General Sales List (GSL) medicines for ocular use within the scope of practice without the need for a PGD.

There is guidance advocating against the use of PGDs for medicines when exemptions in legislation allow their supply and/or administration without the need for a PGD which can be found in the **NICE Medicines Practice Guideline Patient Group Directions (2017)**.

Working with Pharmacy:

We recognise the importance of collaborative working relationships between Pharmacists and Orthoptists in delivering safe and effective patient care. Pharmacists play a crucial role in supporting Orthoptists with their expertise in medication management. Therefore, we encourage open communication and collaboration between Pharmacists and Orthoptists within NHS Trusts to navigate any challenges or concerns related to the use of Medicine Exemptions.

The use of a local protocol or Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) should only relate to the practice of supplying medicines, for example, the pre-packing of atropine minims for the treatment of amblyopia. Local policy or protocols surrounding the use of medicines covered by Medicine Exemptions should not be designed as additional competencies or training that Orthoptists are required to undertake.

Education and Training:

We encourage Orthoptists to engage in continuous professional development opportunities in maintaining competencies, stay informed about the evolving legal framework, and any updates related to the exemptions.

Conclusion:

The BIOS firmly stands by the appropriate use of Medicine Exemptions by Orthoptists with annotation of Medicine Exemption. We emphasise the importance of understanding the exemptions outlined in **Schedule 17** of the **Human Medicines Regulations 2012** and **Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2016**. The legal framework advocates against the use of PGDs when exemptions exist. Registrants are not required to undertake further training or competencies once annotated with Medicines Exemptions.

References:

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/mpg2>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/mpg2/resources/patient-group-directions-pdf-1779401941189>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ahp/med-project/orthoptists/>

<https://www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/when-patient-group-directions-are-not-required/#:~:text=Supplying%20P%20medicines,such%20no%20PGD%20is%20required>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/1916/contents/made>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2016/407/regulation/16/made>