

Position statement on the prescribing of cannabis sativa extract (Sativex[®])

SW London CCGs* do not support the routine prescribing of cannabis sativa extract (Sativex[®])

Cannabis sativa extract is a cannabinoid containing oromucosal spray, licensed as an adjunct in moderate to severe spasticity in multiple sclerosis. In South West London this drug is for specialist use only.

Rationale

- Although cannabis sativa extract is licensed to treat spasticity in multiple sclerosis, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) does not recommend it for this indication as it is not cost-effective.¹ NICE guidance for multiple sclerosis in adults offers alternative treatment options for spasticity.
- NICE does not recommend cannabis sativa extract to treat neuropathic pain in non-specialist settings² and it is not licensed for use in neuropathic pain. It should therefore not be routinely prescribed. In South West London this drug is for hospital specialist use only; it must not be prescribed in primary care.

References

1. NICE CG 186 Multiple sclerosis in adults: management. Accessed 1/3/17. Available from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG186>.
2. National institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) Guidance Do Not Do Recommendations. Accessed 1/3/17. Available from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/savingsandproductivity/collection?page=1&pagesize=2000&type=do%20not%20do>
3. NICE CG173 - Neuropathic Pain in adults: pharmacological management in non-specialist setting. Available from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/cg173>

*SWL CCGs (NHS Croydon CCG, NHS Kingston CCG, NHS Merton CCG, NHS Richmond CCG, NHS Sutton CCG and NHS Wandsworth CCG)
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Guidance for clinicians

Recommendations:

- GPs must not initiate or continue prescribing of cannabis sativa extract (Sativex[®]) in primary care.
- Specialists must not ask GPs to prescribe cannabis sativa extract (Sativex[®]).
- Cannabis sativa extract is a hospital only medicine in South West London. Identify existing patients prescribed cannabis sativa extract (Sativex[®]) and consider referral where appropriate.
- Cannabis sativa extract (Sativex[®]) is licensed as an adjunct in moderate to severe spasticity in multiple sclerosis. However NICE does not recommend it for this indication as it is not a cost effective treatment¹. For cost effective alternatives, please refer to NICE CG186 Multiple sclerosis in adults: management, available from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG186>.
- For neuropathic pain, refer to NICE CG173 Neuropathic Pain in adults: pharmacological management in non-specialist setting, for recommended options, available from: <https://www.nice.org.uk/Guidance/cg173>.
- Prescribing cannabis sativa extract for indications including neuropathic pain, even if recommended by a specialist, is unlicensed. Prescribers should follow GMC guidance on prescribing unlicensed medicines, available here: http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/14327.asp weighing up the benefits and risks. Consider evidence for long term efficacy and safety, along with alternative licensed treatments.

Guidance for patients, carers and guardians

- There is limited evidence to support the use of cannabis sativa extract oromucosal spray (Sativex[®]).
- Your doctor may consider referral to a pain or neurology specialist where appropriate to review your therapy, as there are other evidence-based treatment options available which may be considered.
- The best interests of patients is paramount in all instances and this may result in your GP deciding that this treatment is not in your best interest to prescribe after a consideration of the evidence and alternative treatment options.

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