



PARAMEDIC POCKETBOOK OF
**PRESCRIPTION
MEDICATIONS**

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WILEY Blackwell

Paramedic Pocketbook of Prescription Medications

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WILEY Blackwell

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Contents

Foreword *ix*

Acknowledgements *xi*

List of Abbreviations *xii*

Introduction *xiv*

Drug Legislation and Paramedic Practice 1

Schedule 19 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012 1

Schedule 17 of the Human Medicines Act (Part 3.8) 2

Patient Group Directives 3

Associate of Ambulance Chief Executives Protocols 4

Prescribing 4

Controlled Drugs 5

References 7

Special Circumstances 8

Paediatrics 8

The Older Person 13

Kidney Injury and Disease 15

Hepatic Failure 19

Pregnancy and Breastfeeding 20

Palliative Care and Those at the End of Life 24

References 27

Medication Groups 28

An Example Table 32

A 33

- Aciclovir 33
- Acetylcysteine 34
- Alendronic acid 35
- Alginates 36
- Allopurinol 37
- Amitriptyline 38
- Amlodipine 39
- Amoxicillin 40
- Anakinra 41
- Apixaban 42
- Aripiprazole 43
- Aspirin 44
- Atenolol 45
- Atorvastatin 46
- Atovaquone/Proguanil (hydrochloride) 47
- Azathioprine 48
- Azithromycin 49
- References for A 50

B 51

- Beclometasone (dipropionate) 51
- Bendroflumethiazide 52
- Bisacodyl 53
- Bisoprolol (fumarate) 54
- Budesonide 55
- Bumetanide 56
- Buprenorphine 57
- References for B 58

C 59

- Candesartan (cilexetil) 59
- Carbamazepine 60
- Carbocisteine 61
- Cefalexin 62
- Ceftriaxone 63
- Cetirizine (hydrochloride) 64
- Chloramphenicol 65
- Chlorphenamine 66
- Ciprofloxacin 67
- Citalopram 68
- Clarithromycin 69
- Clotrimazole 70
- Clozapine 71
- Co-Amoxiclav 72
- Co-codamol 73
- Codeine (phosphate) 74

Colchicine 75
Colecalciferol (*with calcium carbonate*) 76
Co-trimoxazole 77
Cyanocoalbumin 78
Cyclizine 79
References for C 80

D 81

Dabigatran (etexilate) 81
Desogestrel (+/- ethinylestradiol) 82
Digoxin 83
Dihydrocodeine (tartate) 84
Diltiazem (hydrochloride) 85
Diazepam 86
Docusate (sodium) 87
Domperidone 88
Donepezil (hydrochloride) 89
Doxazosin 90
Doxycycline 91
References for D 92

E 93

Enoxaparin (sodium) 93
Erythromycin 94
Estradiol 95
Ethinylestradiol 96
References for E 96

F 97

Felodipine 97
Fentanyl 98
Fexofenadine 99
Ferrous (fumarate/sulphate) 100
Finasteride 101
Flucloxacillin 102
Fluoxetine 103
Fluconazole 104
Fludrocortisone (acetate) 105
Folic Acid 106
Furosemide 107
References for F 108

G 109

Gabapentin 109
Gentamicin 110
Gliclazide 111
References for G 111

H 112

- Haloperidol 112
- Hyoscine Butylbromide 113
- Hyoscine hydrobromide 114
- Hydroxocobalamin 115
- Hypromellose 116
- References for H 116

I 117

- Indapamide 117
- Infliximab 118
- Insulin 119
- Irbesartan 120
- Isosorbide mononitrate 121
- Isotretinoin 122
- References for I 123

K 124

- Ketoconazole 124
- Ketamine 125
- References for K 126

L 127

- Lactulose 127
- Lamotrigine 128
- Lansoprazole 129
- Latanoprost 130
- Lercanidipine (hydrochloride) 131
- Levetiracetam 132
- Levothyroxine 133
- Levodopa 134
- Lidocaine 135
- Linagliptin 136
- Lisinopril 137
- Lithium 138
- Loperamide 139
- Loratadine 140
- Lorazepam 141
- Losartan (potassium) 142
- Lymecycline 143
- References for L 144

M 145

- Macrogol 145
- Mefloquine 146
- Mesalazine 147
- Metformin (hydrochloride) 148

Methadone (hydrochloride) 149
Methotrexate 150
Metronidazole 151
Mirtazapine 152
Montelukast 153
Morphine (sulphate) 154
Moxifloxacin 155
References for M 156

N 157

Naproxen 157
Nicotine 158
Nifedipine 159
Nitrofurantoin 160
Nystatin 161
References for N 161

O 162

Olanzapine 162
Omeprazole 163
Oxybutynin (hydrochloride) 164
Reference for O 164

P 165

Paroxetine 165
Perindopril (arginine) 166
Phenoxymethylpenicillin 167
Phenobarbital 168
Phenytoin 169
Pravastatin (sodium) 170
Prednisolone 171
Pregabalin 172
Propranolol (hydrochloride) 173
Permethrin 174
References for P 175

Q 176

Quetiapine 176
Quinine (sulphate) 177
Reference for Q 177

R 178

Ramipril 178
Ranitidine 179
Repaglinide 180
Rehydration Salts 181
Risperidone 182

Rituximab 183
Rivaroxaban 184
References for R 185

S 186

Salbutamol 186
Salmeterol 187
Semaglutide 188
Senna 189
Sertraline 190
Sildenafil 191
Simvastatin 192
Sitagliptin 193
Sodium Valproate 194
Solifenacin (succinate) 195
Spironolactone 196
Sumatriptan 197
References for S 198

T 199

Tamoxifen 199
Tamsulosin (hydrochloride) 200
Temazepam 201
Tetracycline 202
Thiamine 203
Tiotropium (bromide) 204
Tolterodine (tartate) 205
Tramadol (hydrochloride) 206
Trimethoprim 207
References for T 208

V 209

Vancomycin 209
Venlafaxine 210
Reference for V 211

W 212

Warfarin (sodium) 212
Reference for W 212

Z 213

Zoledronic Acid 213
Zopiclone 214

Brand Names Index 215

Glossary 222

Foreword

As paramedics, we are entrusted with the immense responsibility of caring for the health and well-being of those in need. Every day, we face countless challenges, potentially making split-second decisions that can have long-lasting effects.

The world of paramedicine continues to evolve at pace, one area that has changed beyond recognition in the last couple of decades is the paramedic's knowledge of pharmacology; no longer is a protocol approach sufficient. The modern paramedic is expected to understand and navigate the complexities presented by medications and drugs.

This remarkable book presents a treasure trove of easily accessible content offering a comprehensive guide to common prescription medications for paramedics working in a variety of environments. Within these pages you will find a wealth of information that will enhance your understanding of prescription medications and empower you to make informed decisions in this field. This book is a testament to the author in ensuring that paramedics have access to up to date and relevant information in this critical aspect of our practice.

What truly sets this book apart is its commitment to accessibility. A talented artist, Rose has presented the information in a visually engaging manner, using graphics to enhance comprehension. This practical approach is suited fabulously to the pragmatic people that we paramedics tend to be; each medication is presented in a concise and easily understandable manner, making it accessible even to those with a limited pharmacological background.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Rose, for her dedication and expertise in compiling this essential resource. Her

commitment to excellence is evident in every page, and her passion for advancing knowledge and understanding of pharmacology shines through.

To my fellow paramedics, I encourage you to embrace this text as a companion on your journey to providing the highest standard of care. May this book serve as a trusted ally in navigating the complex arena of medications.

**Kirsty Lowery-Richardson, Head of
Education – College of Paramedics**

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List of Abbreviations

5HT – Serotonin

ACE – Angiotensin Converting Enzyme

AF – Atrial Fibrillation

AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

AKI – Acute Kidney Injury

BPH – Benign Prostate Hyperplasia

CCB – Calcium Channel Blocker

CK – Creatine Kinase

CKD – Chronic Kidney Disease

CKD-EPI – Chronic Kidney Disease Epidemiology Collaboration

CNS – Central Nervous System

COPD – Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

COX – Cyclo-oxygenase

D2 – Dopamine

DIC – Disseminated Intravascular Coagulation

DMARDs – Disease Modifying Anti-Rheumatic Drugs

DOAC – Direct Oral Anti-Coagulant

DPP-4 – Dipeptidyl Peptidase 4

DRESS – Drug Reaction with Eosinophilia and Systemic Symptoms

DVLA – Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency

DVT – Deep Vein Thrombosis

ECG – Electrocardiogram

FBC – Full Blood Count

GERD – Gastro-oesophageal Reflux Disease

GSL – General Sales List

H@H – Hospital at Home

INR – International Normalised Ratio

JIC – Just In Case

LDL – Low Density Lipoproteins
LFT – Liver Function Tests
MHRA – Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency
NG – Nasogastric (tube)
NJ – Nasojejunal (tube)
NSAID – Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drug
OCD – Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
P – Pharmacy
PC – Palliative Care
PCOS – Polycystic Ovary Syndrome
PE – Pulmonary Embolism
PEG – Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (tube)
PGD – Patient Group Directive
POM – Prescription Only Medicine
PPCI – Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention
PRN – ‘pro re nata’ (take as required)
QRS – QRS Complex of Electrocardiogram
RAAS – Renin Angiotensin Aldosterone System
RIG – Radiologically inserted gastrostomy (tube)
SCARs – Severe Cutaneous Adverse Reactions
SLE – Systemic Lupus Erythematosus
SNRI – Serotonin and Noradrenaline reuptake inhibitor
STEMI – ST-Elevation Myocardial Infarction
T2DM – Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus
TIA – Transient Ischaemic Attack
URTI – Upper Respiratory Tract Infection
VT – Ventricular Tachycardia

Introduction

'Have You Recently had a Change in Your Medications?'

This is one of my favourite questions to ask a patient. Mainly in the hope that I can use some pharmacological detective skills to find a medication that is causing their symptoms (Figure 1). Maybe their new blood pressure medication is the reason they are feeling dizzy when they stand up? Maybe their insulin dose is causing them to suffer regular hypoglycaemic events? Has their steroid inhaler caused their oral thrush? Has their lidocaine patch sent them into an arrhythmia?

As paramedics, we have a unique knowledge of medications. We have the medications that we are privileged to provide people in an emergency through Schedule 17 and 19 of the Human Medicines Regulation 2012 and then some more that are mutually agreed to be beneficial and included in guidelines from the JRCALC or as a Patient Group Directive. As the role of the paramedic has developed from primarily a transport service to a mobile medical centre, we have developed into expert generalists in urgent and emergency medicine. The role of the paramedic has been less of an emerging profession but an exploding one with a dramatic change in the demands on the profession over the last few decades.

However, a lot of this learning is done post-qualification. Education can still be focused on trauma and life-threatening calls of which the latter is now well expected to make up only 10% of our workload [1]. The other 90% of calls we attend don't always align to our training. This can leave both new and experienced clinicians to suffer from

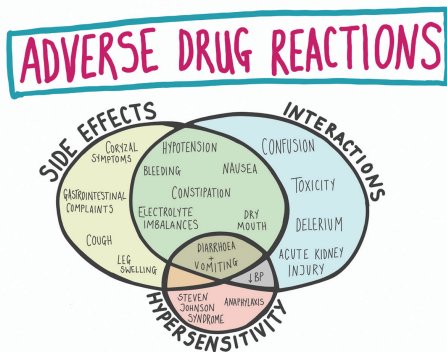
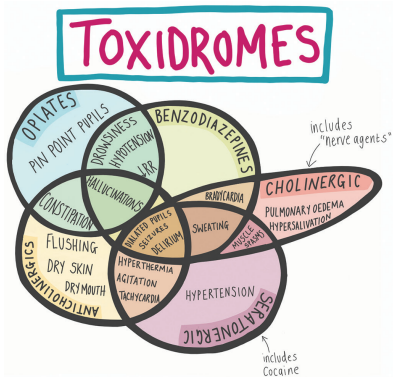


Figure 1 Ambulance call-outs due to medicines can be grouped into different categories which can hide behind common presentations that we might not consider to be related to a person's medication.

regular bouts of uncertainty which when repeated can contribute to burnout [2]. The role of the paramedic involves attending more and more people with urgent presentations and chronic disease which has resulted in paramedics needing a more rounded knowledge of prescription medicines despite this not classically being part of the curriculum for paramedics. That is where I am hoping this book comes in useful, as an easy-to-use resource to familiarise ambulance clinicians with commonly prescribed medications. The list of medications used includes the top prescribed medications in England [3] but with a greater focus on medications in a primary care setting as these are more commonly encountered by ambulance clinicians in the pre-hospital environment.

Due to my location and training, this book focuses on UK-based practice and legislation. However, in the main list, the drug names have been used rather than brand names and many of the uses, side effects and data will still be applicable elsewhere in the world. This pocketbook aims to provide an additional reference for ambulance staff and other non-prescribers in order to familiarise themselves with commonly prescribed medications. It is not meant to be used as an alternative to the British National Formulary (BNF) or a discussion with a prescriber.

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Drug Legislation and Paramedic Practice

Paramedics are able to administer several medications to patients autonomously, meaning without a discussion with a prescriber, but these medications do not all fall under the same legislation.

Schedule 19 of the Human Medicines Regulations 2012

These are medications that **anyone** can administer in an emergency [1]. This is why anyone can give an EpiPen® to someone suffering from suspected anaphylaxis and there is increasing training in 'Take Home Naloxone' for opiate overdoses. Medications under this legislation include:

- Adrenaline 1:1000 up to 1 mg for intramuscular use in anaphylaxis
- Atropine sulphate and obidoxime chloride injection
- Atropine sulphate and pralidoxime chloride injection
- Atropine sulphate injection
- Atropine sulphate, pralidoxime mesylate and avizafone injection
- Chlorphenamine injection
- Dicobalt edetate injection
- Glucagon injection
- Glucose injection
- Hydrocortisone injection
- Naloxone hydrochloride
- Pralidoxime chloride injection
- Pralidoxime mesylate injection
- Promethazine hydrochloride injection

- Snake venom antiserum
- Sodium nitrate injection
- Sodium thiosulphate injection
- Sterile pralidoxime

Note that the only indication here is for anaphylaxis and there is no clear guidance on when other medications should be indicated. Regulation 214 [2] may also be quoted in reference to paramedics which suggests prescription-only medications can only be administered parenterally in the presence of an ‘appropriate practitioner’ of whom paramedics are not identified. However, Regulation 238 states that Regulation 214 should be disregarded in the instance of Schedule 19 medicines in order to save a life in an emergency. Therefore, these medications can still be given by anyone; however, the indication for giving them is not clear.

Schedule 17 of the Human Medicines Act (Part 3.8)

These prescription medications can be given by paramedics for the ‘necessary’ treatment of sick people [2]. This schedule covers different professions that have their own exemptions to allow them to provide certain prescription medications. These may be referred to as ‘exemption medications’. Not all medications we use are covered by this legislation and some of the medications here have fallen out of favour (e.g. streptokinase). Some medications are listed but not indicated for the use that they are now mainly given – for example, heparin is only stated to be used as a flush and not as part of cardiac thrombolysis. Again, there are no indications stated for all these medications.

These medications include:

- Adrenaline acid tartrate
- Adrenaline hydrochloride

- Amiodarone
- Anhydrous glucose
- Benzylpenicillin
- Compound sodium lactate (Hartmann's Solution)
- Diazepam 5 mg/ml
- Ergometrine 500 mcg
- Ergometrine maleate 500 mcg and oxytocin 5 units (Syntometrine®)
- Furosemide
- Glucose
- Heparin sodium (only to flush a cannula)
- Lidocaine hydrochloride
- Metoclopramide
- Morphine sulphate
- Nalbuphine hydrochloride
- Naloxone hydrochloride
- Ondansetron
- Paracetamol
- Reteplase
- Sodium chloride
- Streptokinase
- Succinylated modified fluid gelatin
- Tenecteplase

Patient Group Directives

Patient Group Directives (PGDs) are legislation that allows for a certain group of health care professionals to administer a specific medication to a specific patient group [3]. An example is heparin; ambulance services create a PGD to allow paramedics to administer heparin to people expecting Primary Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PPCI) treatment or thrombolysis. Different ambulance services will have different medications available as PGDs

and this can include a 'new' medication for paramedics such as codeine for moderate pain or a medication we use but in a different form or route, e.g. nebulised adrenaline for croup. What is important to understand is that these medications can only be given for the presentations mentioned on the PGD and if you change employment to another ambulance service or trust you cannot give this medication unless it is also a PGD in your new service.

Associate of Ambulance Chief Executives Protocols

The Joint Royal College Ambulance Liaison Committee (JRCALC) list medications that ambulance services and trusts have generally agreed will benefit people if paramedics are able to administer them. These medications are more colloquially known as 'JRCALC medicines'. This includes medications such as clopidogrel. Individual ambulance trusts may have their own specific guidelines for these medications through PGD, or they will follow JRCALC guidance.

Prescribing

Some paramedics will choose to do additional training to gain their Non-Medical Prescribing qualification at Bachelors or Masters level. This allows them to prescribe medications from the BNF and they will be listed as an independent or supplementary prescriber on the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). However, at the time of writing, paramedic prescribers are only able to prescribe a limited list of controlled drugs [4].

Controlled Drugs

Since I've mentioned it, let's talk about controlled drugs.

Paramedics can autonomously administer a selection of what are known as 'controlled' medications such as morphine sulphate and benzodiazepines through various forms of legislation. The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 [5] places drugs in different 'classes' which are organised on a scale based on the potential harm when misused and includes both prescription drugs and illicit drugs.

Class A – Includes cocaine, heroin, LSD, MDMA, morphine, methadone.

Class B – Includes oral amphetamines, cannabis, codeine, dihydrocodeine, ketamine and barbiturates.

Class C – Includes buprenorphine, benzodiazepines, tramadol, zopiclone, androgenic and anabolic steroids, gabapentin, pregabalin and most recently nitrous oxide.

The Misuse of Drugs (Safe Custody) regulations 1973 is related to the safe storage of controlled drugs and the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001 discusses who can provide controlled drugs and the requirements for supply, prescribing and record keeping (Table 1). This is where the terminology of having different 'schedules' of controlled medications comes in. This is why morphine and midazolam need to be double locked in a safe whereas diazepam does not.

This legislation originates from attempts to prevent misuse of drugs to cause harm. The knowledge behind drug misuse is evolving and a greater understanding of life experiences that contributes to drug use is becoming clearer. There is greater appreciation that drug use and addiction is a coping mechanism for early childhood trauma which can be supported through appropriate rehabilitation. Legislation is yet to reflect this; however, there is growing acceptance within the medicine and psychology fields that to tackle drug misuse legislation needs to be supportive not punitive [6].

Table 1 Controlled Drug Schedules

| SCHEDULE | EXAMPLES | REQUIREMENTS | PREHOSPITAL EXAMPLES |
|------------|---|---|--|
| Schedule 1 | Hallucinogenic drugs, ecstasy-like drugs, opium, cannabis | Home office licence required for production, possession+supply. Controlled drugs register kept with pharmacy details. | NONE |
| Schedule 2 | Opiates, stimulants, cocaine, ketamine, medicinal cannabis products | Controlled drugs register to be kept detailing administration of supply. Must be stored in a locked safe. | Morphine sulphate (IV preparation) Ketamine |
| Schedule 3 | Most barbituates, gabapentin, pregabalin, midazolam, temazepam | Some groups must be stored in a locked safe. Retention of invoices for 2 years | Midazolam |
| Schedule 4 | other benzodiazepines, Z-drug, anabolic + androgenic steroids | Retention of invoices for 2 years | Diazepam |
| Schedule 5 | Codeine phosphate, oral preparations of morphine | Retention of invoices for 2 years | Codeine, oramorph® |