Position statement on the prescribing of omega 3 fatty acids in primary care

**SW London CCGs** do NOT support the routine prescribing of **OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS** except for the management of hypertriglyceridaemia, when a fibrate or statin is not tolerated.

**Rationale**

- SWL guidance for the management of hypertriglyceridaemia only supports use of omega 3 fatty acids (omacor or maxepa) when a fibrate or statin is not tolerated.¹
- NICE CG 18: Cardiovascular disease: risk assessment and reduction including lipid modification; does not support the use of omega-3 fatty acids for prevention of cardiovascular disease (CVD) to any of the following²:
  - Primary or secondary prevention
  - Chronic kidney disease
  - Type 1 or 2 diabetes

- There are no good quality data for their use in prevention of dementia, pre-menstrual syndrome, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), atrial fibrillation, eczema, osteoarthritis or age-related macular degeneration.³

- Cochrane reviews of clinical trials for the use of omega-3 fatty acids in autism, dementia and macular degeneration found no evidence of benefit.³

- The Maudsley Clinical Guidelines suggest a possible role for omega-3 fatty acids as an adjunct in patients with schizophrenia, particularly in patients responding poorly to clozapine. NICE CG155 recommended more research should be undertaken into their use in patients considered to be at high risk of developing psychosis due to very limited evidence. Therefore prescribing of omega 3 in this unlicensed/off label use should remain with specialists.³

- NICE CG 186 Multiple Sclerosis in adults: management does not support the use of omega-3 or omega-6 fatty acid compounds to treat MS. There is no evidence that they affect relapse frequency or progression of MS.⁴

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¹ SWL Guidance on the management of hypertriglyceridaemia 2016
³ Prescqipp Bulletin 47 (October 2013) Omega-3 fatty acids
⁴ NICE CG 186 Multiple Sclerosis in adults: management (OCT 2014) https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG186/chapter/1-Recommendations#modifiable-risk-factors-for-relapse-or-progression-of-ms

*SWL CCGs (Croydon CCG, Kingston CCG, Merton, CCG, Richmond CCG, Sutton CCG, & Wandsworth CCG)*

Position Statement on prescribing of omega-3 fatty acids on FP10 prescriptions
References

Guidance for clinicians

Recommendations

- All patients taking omega-3 fatty acid compounds should have their therapy reviewed.

- For the management of hypertriglyceridaemia consider changing patients taking omega-3 fatty acid compounds to a fibrate (e.g. fenofibrate capsules) or statin if neither of these have been previously prescribed. For further information, see SWL guidance for the management of hypertriglyceridaemia at [http://www.swlmcg.nhs.uk/Clinical/Cardiovascular/HYPERTRIGLYCERIDAEMIA%20-%20Guidance%20for%20the%20Management%20of%20Hypertriglyceridaemia%202016.pdf](http://www.swlmcg.nhs.uk/Clinical/Cardiovascular/HYPERTRIGLYCERIDAEMIA%20-%20Guidance%20for%20the%20Management%20of%20Hypertriglyceridaemia%202016.pdf)

- Consider stopping omega-3 fatty acids in patients taking it for primary or secondary prevention of CVD. Encourage lifestyle modifications – cardio-protective diet, physical activity, weight management, alcohol consumption, smoking cessation).

- Use in patients with schizophrenia is unlicensed and should be reviewed in conjunction with a specialist with a view to stopping prescribing if no benefit has been achieved. If to continue then it should be for specialist prescribing and monitoring.

- There is no good quality data to support the use in prevention of dementia, premenstrual syndrome, ADHD, atrial fibrillation, eczema, osteoarthritis or age-related macular degeneration. Consider stopping omega-3 if used for these indications, in conjunction with the specialist if required.

Guidance for patients

- There is very limited evidence for the use of omega 3 fatty acid supplements
- Your treatment will be reviewed and your clinician may decide to stop treatment
- Omega 3 fatty acid supplements are available over the counter in pharmacies and other retail outlets should you wish to continue taking it.