POSITION STATEMENT* ON VITAMIN D PRESCRIBING FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED SIXTEEN AND OVER.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- GPs should prescribe for treatment of deficiency and insufficiency on prescription in line with Wandsworth CCG guidelines.
- Vitamin D supplements for maintenance in adults (excluding special groups¹) and young people aged 16 and over should be purchased over the counter.
- GPs should advise and document¹ in the patient’s medical record that maintenance vitamin D supplements for adults and young people aged 16 and over should be purchased over the counter.
- Eligible patients may access Healthy Start vitamins- see link: Healthy Start

*This position statement excludes patients where the clinical assessment of the patient indicates that continuous treatment is justified e.g. conditions resulting in intestinal malabsorption e.g. Crohn’s disease or where retreatment is necessary. Advice for children under sixteen regarding the prescription / use of Vitamin D supplements should follow national guidelines or specialist advice.

¹This statement also excludes pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Wandsworth CCG spends a substantial amount on ergocalciferol (vitamin D2) and colecalciferol. Over the last 5 years the number of items prescribed has increased. Although this is the case, costs appear to be slowing, potentially as the drive to prescribe the most cost effective products is taking hold.

The Drug Tariff (August 2016)² states that vitamins and minerals can be prescribed ‘only in the management of actual or potential vitamin or mineral deficiency, and are not to be prescribed as dietary supplements or ‘pick me ups’’. The most current BNF³ also reinforces this message.

Prophylaxis supplementation can cost approximately £2 per month if purchased over the counter.

Lifestyle advice should be given to all patients who have deficiency or who are at risk from deficiency:
- Short daily periods of sun exposure without sunscreen (10-15 minutes for most)
- Dietary - vitamin D can be acquired from oily fish, eggs and meat, margarine, soya products, dairy products
- Vitamin D can also be obtained from supplements

Evidence for the benefit of treatment for those with vitamin D insufficiency (unless at risk- see WCCG vitamin D guideline) is currently thought to be inconclusive. Furthermore two large meta-analyses published in the BMJ in April 2014⁴ led researchers to conclude that there is no ‘highly convincing’ evidence that vitamin D supplementation improves outcomes. However, researchers did say that benefits from vitamin D supplementation were ‘probable’ in some at-risk groups.

Experts said the findings suggest GPs should be cautious about prescribing vitamin D supplements widely in people without symptoms, until the risks as well as the benefits have been properly evaluated.

References:
4. Vitamin D and multiple health outcomes: umbrella review of systematic reviews and meta-analyses of observational studies and randomised trials. http://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g2035

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