Dear Healthcare Professional,

**Prescribing anti-epileptic drugs to people with epilepsy**

It is important for anyone with epilepsy to maintain a consistent supply of the same version of their anti-epileptic drug (AED) or combination of these drugs.

Switching from a branded drug to a generic drug may affect the bioavailability of the active ingredient in the medication and cause a breakthrough seizure or side effects. The same may occur in switching between generic drugs or in prescribing or dispensing parallel import drugs. The key factor is consistency.

Just one single seizure can impact on a person’s ability to drive, their employment and well being and may increase their risk of injury and harm.

Please ensure:

- This person is always prescribed the same version of the AED or combination of AEDs which control seizures at the lowest possible dose
- You write the name of the brand on the prescription so that the pharmacist gives your patient that drug. If prescribing a generic AED, please add the name of the drug company
- You do not switch between brands or non-branded generics but keep the same formulation
- If a change to medication is made, the patient is made aware of this.

This advice is in line with the recommendation of the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) in their updated guidance on the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy (2012).

The annual cost of AEDs to the NHS is less than one per cent of the total budget for drugs. Although prescribing generic drugs reduces expenditure on medication, it could also result in hidden costs such as emergency visits to hospital and extra clinic appointments.

Yours sincerely

Professor Ley Sander, MD PhD FRCP
Medical Director, Epilepsy Society