

# QIPP Detail Aid

Providing support for quality in prescribing

## PREDNISOLONE - USE PLAIN, NOT SOLUBLE TABLETS

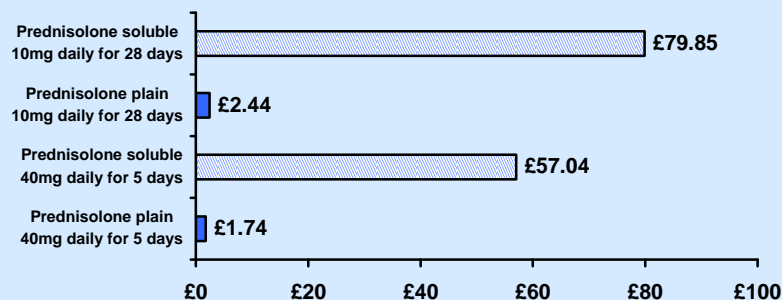
### WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

- Prednisolone soluble tablets currently cost over **30 times** as much as plain tablets in Primary Care. The difference between the two in secondary care is even greater.
- Based on 6 months' figures in 2014, Primary Care in the East Midlands spends over £900,000 on soluble prednisolone 5mg tablets annually. Soluble tablets accounted for only 6% of the prescriptions but cost more than all the other (94%) prescriptions for this strength of tablet.
- If half of the prescriptions for soluble prednisolone had been plain tablets instead, nearly £500,000 would be available each year in the East Midlands to spend on other treatments.
- **ADD LOCAL DATA HERE**

### WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE?

- Prednisolone is used widely for short courses in inflammatory and allergic disorders and occasionally for longer term immunosuppression.
- Both 1mg and 5mg strengths are relatively small tablets and do not present a problem in swallowing for the majority of patients.
- Prednisolone is generally well absorbed after taking orally and the bioavailability of the soluble and plain tablets are similar.<sup>1</sup>
- Soluble tablets may be justified in a limited number of clinical situations, for example those with fine-bore enteral feeding tubes. However administration of plain prednisolone tablets is faster for nursing and care staff and may be more convenient for patients.
- Limited anecdotal information suggests that the plain tablets disperse in water to make a fine suspension (unlicensed use).

### WHAT ARE THE COSTS?



Costs based on Drug Tariff prices, January 2015

### KEY MESSAGES

- **Plain prednisolone tablets are significantly cheaper than soluble ones and should be preferred in the majority of patients.**
- **Soluble tablets are more time consuming than plain tablets for parents, carers and nursing staff.**
- **Patients taking soluble tablets should be reviewed regularly with a view to changing to plain where appropriate.**
- **Older children may find plain tablets more convenient to take than soluble ones.**

#### References:

1. Prednisolone. In Drugdex System, Truven Health Analytics, USA via [www.micromedex.com](http://www.micromedex.com), accessed January 2015.