**Patients Stuck Abroad and Needing a Re-Supply of ARVs**

When patients cannot return to the UK due to the pandemic/travel restrictions, three options are available for re-supply of ARVs.

**\*\*Posting medicines abroad is not recommended due to the variability in standards of postal services abroad, including contents insurance, storage, tracking, speed and secure delivery\*\***

**Option 1: Obtain ARVs locally from an HIV clinic**

***Pros:***

1. The fastest option for the patient and your clinic, therefore the preferred option
2. Little to no administrative requirements for the clinic/pharmacy team
3. It bypasses restrictive regulations, both in the supply and export.

***Cons:***

1. The patient may need to pay for the ARVs, which might be reclaimable on travel insurance, depending on the FCO recommendations at the time of travel and the level of insurance cover on their policy
2. The HIV clinic abroad may need proof/confirmation from your clinic
3. The exact ARVs may not be available

**Suggested process:**

1. You may need to support the patient with locating a local HIV clinic.  Some European/near-European clinics can be found here: <https://www.aidsmap.com/european-test-finder>
2. You may need to identify if the ARVs are available in that country.  If not available, you may need to suggest alternative regimens.  Alternatives may include previous regimens that remain safe and effective for the short-term or a minor switch that can bypass the routine monitoring as an exception, such as FTC/TDx to 3TC/TDx.  Advise on what to do if problems occur and the common side effects, even if it is a previous regimen.
3. You may need to provide a letter by fax/email to the patient/local clinic documenting the current ARV regimen, the doses and recent blood results. Ensure that you are following your clinic/hospital procedure for sending confidential information.
4. Notify the patient that the costs associated with this method are their responsibility.  They may be able to claim the costs through their travel insurance cover.
5. Notify the patient that the brand name, packaging, and tablet colour may be different and to check the packet's generic medicine name.

**Option 2: Clinic to facilitate ARVs collection by or delivery to a friend/relative in the UK for onward couriering to patient abroad**

***Pros:***

1. The majority of the admin responsibilities lie with the patient or the friend/relative
2. The legal responsibilities lie with the patient or the friend/relative
3. The cost for international delivery sits with the patient or friend/relative

***Cons:***

1. Relies on the friend/relative to be available for collection or delivery from the clinic and secondly, collection by a courier from the friend/relative
2. Can lead to admin for pharmacy staff as a result of the actions/inactions of the friend/relative
3. Variable and unpredictable Customs issues, particularly after Brexit.  It requires a Customs declaration that the medication is prescribed for personal use and supplied free of charge
4. Depending on the courier, it may require an invoice (see appendix).
5. Slowest option for the patient

**Suggested process:**

1. Notify the patient that the costs associated with this method are their responsibility.  They may be able to claim the costs through their travel insurance cover.
2. Notify the patient that the parcel's environmental conditions during transit are outside your control.
3. Obtain name, address, contact details of the friend/relative
4. Arrange collection by / delivery to the friend/relative. Ensure the friend/relative will be available for the collection/delivery from the clinic to them and the subsequent courier collection from them to the patient  (if the courier collection date is known).
5. Obtain patient consent for their clinical information (letter/prescription - see point 6) to be included in an envelope marked "Customs documentation", attached to the outside of the parcel. The parcel may be opened at any point once dispatched from the clinic, including by the friend/relative.
6. Include a copy of the prescription and a letter explaining the contents (see Appendix 1) inside the customs documentation envelope. An invoice may also be required (see Appendix 2).
7. Package the parcel in a way that does not require re-packaging by the friend/relative and protected for transit and potential fluctuations in temperature.  A non-transparent sturdy box with bubble-wrap inside is sufficient.
8. Provide the patient or friend/relative with the content's value (in GBP) excluding VAT.  The value is the cost of the medicines to your Trust and the no-cost to the patient. The patient also requires this value for the customs declaration when booking the courier and must be entered accurately. The pharmacy may be required to sign the consignment document to confirm accuracy.  The patient should be made aware that they may need to pay VAT in the delivery country despite being free of charge. However, the purpose of the letter is to highlight that the contents are free of charge.
9. Advise the patient or friend/relative that the 'contents category' on the customs declaration should state "Prescribed medication for personal use and supplied free of charge".

**Option 3: Patient to arrange a courier for collection from hospital**

***Pros:***

1. The customs responsibilities lie with the patient
2. The cost of international delivery sits with the patient
3. Greater assurances for success from direct delivery from hospital to the patient
4. Trackable by the clinic and patient

***Cons:***

1. Puts clinic in a legal vs ethical dilemma for providing NHS care abroad and should only be done in exceptional circumstances. In almost all individual cases, there will not be a compelling reason to warrant adopting this option.
2. Significant admin for pharmacy staff, including packaging of medication
3. Variable and unpredictable Customs issues, particularly after Brexit.  It requires a Customs declaration that the medication is prescribed for personal use and supplied free of charge.

**Suggested process:**

1. Notify the patient that the costs associated with this method are their responsibility.  They may be able to claim the costs through their travel insurance cover.
2. Notify the patient that the parcel's environmental conditions during transit are outside your control.
3. Obtain patient consent for their clinical information (letter/prescription - see point 4) to be included in an envelope marked "Customs documentation", attached to the outside of the parcel. The parcel may be opened at any point once dispatched from the clinic.
4. Include a copy of the prescription and a letter explaining the contents (see Appendix 1) in the customs documentation envelope. An invoice may also be required (see Appendix 2).
5. Package the parcel so that it is protected for transit and potential fluctuations in temperature.  A non-transparent sturdy box with bubble-wrap inside is sufficient.
6. Provide the patient with the content's value (in GBP) excluding VAT. The value is the cost of the medicines to your Trust and the no-cost to the patient.  The patient also requires this value for the customs declaration when booking the courier and must be entered accurately. The pharmacy may be required to sign the consignment document to confirm accuracy.  The patient should be made aware that they may need to pay VAT in the delivery country despite being free of charge. However, the purpose of the letter is to highlight that the contents are free of charge.
7. Provide the patient with the weight (kg) and the height/length/width or depth dimensions (cm) of the parcel as this is needed to book a courier.
8. Advise the patient that the 'contents category' on the customs declaration should state, "Prescribed medication for personal use and supplied free of charge".
9. Advise the patient of any collection requirements – the pharmacy will usually require the courier to give the patient's name and date of birth to release the parcel.  The patient should ensure these requirements are clear to the courier.
10. Provide the patient with the collection address and suitable dates/times for collection.
11. The patient then books the courier using the information from steps 6-10.  You can suggest a preferred courier that operates effectively with your hospital.
12. The patient will need to email you the courier documents – usually a waybill to give to the courier and an address label or barcode to stick to the parcel.
13. Attach the parcel label and keep the waybill next to the parcel (or loosely attached for easy removal).  Make staff at the collection point aware of the expected collection: date, courier company, destination country.

**APPENDIX 1: Letter template (using your Trust's headed paper) – delete this line**

 Ref: …

Clinic Name

**Trust Name**

**Private and Confidential**

c/o International Customs and Border Control

Address

Main Switchboard: XXX XXXX XXXX

Clinic Secretaries: XXX XXXX XXXX

Email address: XXXXXXX

DD Month YYYY

**To Whom It May Concern**

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: **Patient Name** Date of Birth: **…**

Hospital No: **…** NHS No: **…**

UK address: **…**   
Country address: **…**

I am writing this letter to confirm that Mr/s … is a patient of Hospital Name Hospital in City, United Kingdom where s/he regularly attends for monitoring and treatment of a chronic medical condition.

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and associated travel restrictions, we are urgently sending Mr/s …  the following medication, which s/he requires to take without interruption: 

1.         Medication name and formulation and quantity of supply (\_\_ x30 tablets/capsules)

2.         Medication name and formulation and quantity of supply (\_\_ x30 tablets/capsules) 

**This medication is for personal use by Mr/s ….  It is supplied free of any charge by the National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom.***Please release this parcel at your earliest convenience to prevent interruption in medical treatment.*

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us using the telephone number or email address above.

Yours faithfully,

**Name**

**Job Title**

**GMC/GPhC Number: XXXXXXX**

**APPENDIX 2: INVOICE**

*The following information has been compiled with the support of HMRC telephone support.*

Some couriers are authorised economic operators (AEO) and are considered reliable in their customs-related operations, such as assessing parcels' tax eligibility (commodities) on behalf of HMRC. AEO's can fast-track the parcel through customs but the courier will require an invoice with the parcel.

You can check if the courier has AEO status here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/check-if-a-business-holds-authorised-economic-operator-status>

If the courier an AEO, you will need to check with them on their requirements, which is likely to include an invoice. The courier should provide you with an invoice template.

If you are required to submit an invoice, you will need a commodity code for each drug being sent.

**Commodity code**

Dispensed medicines will always have a commodity code beginning in 3004. You can find the exact code here:

UK: <https://www.trade-tariff.service.gov.uk/headings/3004>

Northern Ireland: <https://www.trade-tariff.service.gov.uk/xi/headings/3004>

*At the time of last check (24 February 2021)*, the following commodity codes apply for the UK, including Northern Ireland:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| TYPE | CODE | INCLUDES | EXCLUDES |
| Antibiotics | 30 04 20 00 00 | Anti-tuberculosis Azithromycin  Clindamycin  Co-trimoxazole  Dapsone  Doxycycline  Sulfadiazine | Antifungals  Penicillin or streptomycin derived drugs |
| Antimalarials | 30 04 60 00 00 | Pyrimethamine | Primaquine  Doxycycline |
| Other | 30 04 90 00 00 | Antifungals  HIV Antiretrovirals (all)  Primaquine |  |
| Vitamins and supplements (prescribed) | 30 04 50 00 00 | Calcium  Colecalciferol (D3)  Folic acid  Iron  Pyridoxine (B6)  Vitamins (other) |  |

All commodity coding or contents category enquires:

HMRC Classification team: [classification.enquiries@hmrc.gov.uk](mailto:classification.enquiries@hmrc.gov.uk)

**Contents value**

Even though treatment is being supplied free of charge, it is considered a commodity. It requires a GBP value excluding VAT (i.e. the cost of the medicines to the Trust).  The patient also requires this value for the customs declaration when booking the courier and must be entered accurately. The pharmacy is required to sign the document(s) to confirm the accuracy.  The patient should be made aware that they may need to pay VAT in the delivery country despite being free of charge. However, the letter's purpose is to highlight that the contents are free of charge in the UK.

**VAT/EORI number**

Some invoices require either a VAT number or EORI number to be provided. If you do not know either number, use "GBPR". Drugs dispensed by an outsourced pharmacy are zero VAT and do not require a VAT return submission by the Trust.

* VAT number: Your dispensing pharmacy, whether internal or outsourced, will have one
* EORI number: (Economic Operator Registration and Identification Number) Your Trust may have one which is used to import/export goods to the EU