



Department
of Health

From the Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
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Mr J Layton
Senior Coroner
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7 MAY 2014

Dear Mr. Layton,

Thank you for your further letter of 3 April 2014 in response to mine of 31 March 2014 concerning the death of Lee Jay Bonsall.

Thank you also for clarifying the basis for your recommendation on the repeat prescription of citalopram. As I said in my earlier response to you, there are no national restrictions on the repeat prescribing of citalopram in England.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's clinical guidelines for the treatment and management of depression in adults (CG90) state:

"1.5.2.6 For people started on antidepressants who are not considered to be at increased risk of suicide, normally see them after 2 weeks. See them regularly thereafter, for example at intervals of 2 to 4 weeks in the first 3 months, and then at longer intervals if response is good.

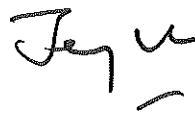
1.5.2.7 A person with depression started on antidepressants who is considered to present an increased suicide risk or is younger than 30 years (because of the potential increased prevalence of suicidal thoughts in the early stages of antidepressant treatment for this group) should normally be seen after 1 week and frequently thereafter as appropriate until the risk is no longer considered clinically important."

While I would agree that one might therefore expect antidepressant medicines in most cases to be prescribed in accordance with these arrangements, NICE's guidelines are not rules and do not restrict the prescribing, including the repeat

prescribing, of such medicines. NICE's clinical guidelines represent best practice and are based on the available evidence and developed through wide consultation. Prescribing and the management of individual cases, however, remain the clinical responsibility of the doctor concerned.

NICE will be reviewing its guidelines on depression (CG90) in due course. I will copy this reply to NICE, including your prescribing concerns, so they can consider them for their next guideline review. I hope that this further response is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

JEREMY HUNT