

Prescribing of ketamine for pain is not supported

Thurrock CCG and Basildon and Brentwood CCG do not support GP prescribing of ketamine in pain management.

Ketamine is an anaesthetic that can be used orally to treat pain. It is not currently licensed in any form in the UK for treating pain. Ketamine is unlicensed if oral liquid preparations, prepared by 'specials' manufacturers, are used, or off-label if the solution for injection or infusion is used orally (different indication and route to the license).

Ketamine is known as being a drug of abuse. It is controlled as a class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, and as a schedule 4, part 1 drug under the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001. The NICE Evidence Summary: Unlicensed/off-label Medicines ESUOM27: Chronic pain: oral ketamine (25 February 2014)¹ states:

‘There is no good quality evidence on the use oral ketamine to treat pain in adults, and no firm conclusions can be drawn on the use of oral ketamine for treating pain in young people.’

In view of the lack of evidence described in the NICE summary, Thurrock CCG and Basildon and Brentwood CCG do not support the prescribing of ketamine for pain in new patients. Any request for GPs to prescribe should be referred back to the referring clinician.

Patients currently receiving ketamine for pain should be reviewed by the pain clinic (or referred back to the pain clinic) at the earliest opportunity with a view to changing to alternative formulary analgesics.

Providers commissioned to provide services on behalf of Thurrock CCG and Basildon and Brentwood CCG are reminded that they are required to follow the local joint formulary and prescribing guidance, or relevant Medicines Management agreement.

- 1) <http://publications.nice.org.uk/esuom27-chronic-pain-oral-ketamine-esuom27>

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