

Pharmacists call for change in Prescribing Rules to provide them with increased options to Supply Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) Medicines



Measure would increase access to HRT products for women through community pharmacies and help tackle supply shortages

In response to the significant ongoing disruption to the supply of some Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) products in Ireland, pharmacists are calling on the Minister for Health to immediately change the law to provide pharmacists with increased options for dispensing HRT

products. The call by the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU) follows a similar move in the UK, whereby pharmacists there are now permitted to provide substitute HRT products to patients. At the moment, pharmacists cannot amend prescriptions for HRT and have to revert back to the prescriber or refer the woman back to her doctor if the medicine is unavailable. Pharmacists are medicines experts and have the clinical skills to provide this seamless care to women.

Chair of the IPU's Pharmacy Contractors Committee, Kathy Maher said, "There have been serious supply issues with HRT products over the last number of years, which have accelerated in recent months. This is causing significant stress and frustration to women trying to source these essential medicines. By allowing pharmacists to dispense alternative HRT products without the requirement to revert to a GP, or send the patient back each time, pharmacists will be able to offer patients another product to relieve their symptoms if their normal HRT is out of stock.

"We are therefore calling on the Minister for Health to follow the lead of the UK and to immediately allow pharmacists to be able to dispense substitute HRT products without a prescription and without having to resort to a GP. This measure will mean women can be offered another product at the pharmacy to relieve their symptoms, if their normal HRT is out of stock. This would save time for patients, pharmacists and doctors and help alleviate the huge anxiety felt by women over supply and access to essential treatments."

Ms Maher also advised that women should talk to their pharmacist if "they have any concerns about their HRT medicines."