

Pharmacists warn that Brexit will affect UK online prescriptions

- **IPU says people must get informed of changes if they rely on online consultations**

Wednesday 13 January: The Irish Pharmacy Union has warned people to get informed on the implications of Brexit on some UK prescriptions pointing out that if you use an online teleconsultation to get your prescription, even if it's via an Irish website, if the prescriber is based in the UK (including Northern Ireland), your prescription will not be valid in Ireland.

New legislation introduced post-Brexit allows for hard copies of medical prescriptions from a face-to-face consultation with a UK-based prescriber to continue to be recognised; this is to enable continued access to healthcare of citizens travelling between jurisdictions, i.e. being able to fulfil a prescription from your home country when in the other. However, online prescriptions or prescriptions written by UK-based prescribers for the purposes of enabling mail order supply issued to people living in Ireland are no longer valid. This means that, if a teleconsultation is carried out by a UK-based doctor for a patient based in Ireland (even if accessed through an Irish website), neither a digital nor a physical prescription resulting from that teleconsultation will be acceptable.

IPU Secretary General Darragh O'Loughlin said, "We know people are increasingly using online medical consultations, especially since the pandemic started because local GP services are less accessible, and the person may also prefer not to see someone face-to-face. However, if you are using a medical teleconsultation service, you need to be mindful of where the doctor is based. Even if it is an Irish-based website, if the doctor is based in the UK and the consultation is online, the prescription is not valid in Ireland and therefore cannot be dispensed by a pharmacist here.

"The intention of the new legislation is to prevent prescriptions being issued by information society services (ISS) or cross-border telemedicine services, based in the UK or other third countries. The current Brexit deal covers trade, not services, and the issuing of a prescription in such a manner is regarded as a service with a third country."

UK prescriptions written before 1 January 2021 following a teleconsultation which are still in date are still valid.

Mr O'Loughlin concluded, "It is really important that people are aware of this change. Pharmacists are no longer able to accept prescriptions from UK-prescribers that came from a teleconsultation, and this could leave patients in a very difficult position. If you are using a teleconsultation service, you need to be very mindful of this change and ensure the prescriber is based in Ireland. Pharmacies are open and supporting people in their communities at what is a

very stressful and anxious time because of the ongoing pandemic. Brexit-related issues with a prescription is the last thing our patients need, so it is really important people understand this change.”

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