



Dr Christopher Green  
MB BCH FRCA FFPMRCA  
Consultant in Interventional Pain Medicine

## **Off-licence use of Medications for Chronic Pain**

### **What is an off-licence medicine?**

Medications are required to have a Marketing Authorisation (MA) before they can be prescribed by your doctor. This means that it has been approved by a regulatory body for use in humans under certain conditions. Those conditions generally state what the reason is for using the medication and how it is to be given. Once a medication has approval it can be sold by the pharmaceutical company. Some medications, however, have been found to be useful in other medical conditions that are not stipulated on the authorisation. Where they are used for those other conditions, they are said to be used off-licence.

### **When can a medication be used off licence?**

The General Medical Council states that a doctor may prescribe unlicensed medicines where, on the basis of assessment of the individual patient, they conclude for medical reasons that it is necessary to do so to meet the specific needs of the patient.

This means that there is no suitable licensed alternative applicable for the patient.

In each case there must be sufficient experience or evidence of using the medicine to demonstrate its effectiveness and safety to warrant its use.

### **What medications are used in Chronic Pain**

Many medications are commonly used off-licence in chronic pain. Your consultant will have good experience in using them, as will many other specialists in Pain Medicine, and probably other specialties too. Examples include the use of some antidepressant and anti-epilepsy drugs for chronic pain, as well as the use of steroids in some injections.

# Targeting Pain

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