

Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – PRESCRIPTION PAINKILLERS

I write in response to your request for information in relation to prescription painkillers in NHS Lothian.

Question:

1. The total number of individual patients who were prescribed paracetamol in the calendar years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 to 30 June. Break this down both by the form in which the paracetamol was prescribed (for example, capsules, gel, spray) and the cost to the NHS of buying and supplying the prescribed paracetamol in each year.
2. The total number of individual patients who were prescribed ibuprofen in the calendar years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025 to 30 June. Break this down both by the form in which the ibuprofen was prescribed (for example, capsules, gel, spray) and the cost to the NHS of buying and supplying the prescribed ibuprofen in each year.

Answer:

The information you have requested is detailed in the attached excel spreadsheet. The data is taken from paid items dispensed. The patient numbers data is for prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and community dispensing doctors. It does not include medicines dispensed in hospital or hospital based clinics. This information is not collected centrally. Information will be held in individual patient records, but in order to provide the information you request it would be necessary to review each patient record over the period you have specified, requiring significant resources. Under section 12 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, NHS Lothian is not required to respond to your request if the resources required to do so equate to more than £600 in cost.

I have not released numbers of 5 or fewer in the spreadsheet, and have masked totals which would reveal these numbers, as this information could lead to the identification of the individuals involved. Since we do not have their consent to release their personal data, the information is exempt under section 38 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 as to provide it would breach the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018.

The cost data includes prescriptions dispensed both in community pharmacists and dispensing doctors, and in hospitals and hospital based clinics.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at <https://www.foi.scot/appeal>. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the reviewer at the address at the top of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhslothian.scot/FOI>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director of Nursing Midwifery and AHPs
Cc: Chief Executive

Patient count data shown are based on prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance suppliers and dispensing doctors only, and therefore does not take into account medicines dispensed by hospitals or hospital based clinics.

Number of Patients	Year						
Formulation	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
CHEWABLE CAPSULE					*	*	*
CREAM				*			*
CUTANEOUS GEL				10815	40530	25537	76882
EFFERVESCENT GRANULES	18	16	15	12	12	11	84
GEL	24966	30423	31520	31650			118559
MEDICATED PLASTER				* *	*	*	
MODIFIED-RELEASE CAPSULE	*	*	*	* *	*		17
MODIFIED-RELEASE TABLET	62	58	60	37	34	20	271
ORAL CAPSULE	53	44	31	107	66	36	337
ORAL SUSPENSION	5658	6318	9355	9350	11186	5238	47105
ORAL TABLET	16735	18866	19077	23050	23464	13489	114681
ORODISPERSIBLE TABLET	54	28	33	37	28	18	198
SPRAY	45	47	42	29	36	18	217
Grand Total	*	*	*	75098	* *		358374

Cost data shown are based on prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance suppliers, dispensing doctors, and hospitals or hospital based clinics.

Spending	Year						
Formulation	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
CHEWABLE CAPSULE	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£98.19	£57.75	£155.94
CREAM	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£24.84	£0.00	£0.00	£24.84
CUTANEOUS GEL	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£55,425.20	£359,278.25	£183,718.07	£598,421.52
EFFERVESCENT GRANULES	£1,321.92	£1,176.40	£598.40	£688.16	£833.00	£512.72	£5,130.60
GEL	£193,553.91	£246,928.32	£245,554.89	£257,172.28	£9,732.58	£4,993.40	£957,935.38
MEDICATED PLASTER	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00	£138.42	£29.09	£37.50	£205.01
MODIFIED-RELEASE CAPSULE	£40.60	£33.60	£16.80	£102.80	£87.85	£65.16	£346.81
MODIFIED-RELEASE TABLET	£2,223.06	£2,160.60	£2,109.46	£1,557.97	£1,372.20	£531.86	£9,955.15
ORAL CAPSULE	£1,853.29	£1,988.60	£1,664.53	£3,258.62	£3,489.52	£1,452.18	£13,706.74
ORAL SUSPENSION	£25,409.20	£26,835.72	£103,764.03	£122,877.10	£109,298.25	£42,148.09	£430,332.38
ORAL TABLET	£185,085.46	£191,869.68	£167,970.14	£189,507.63	£174,887.85	£77,832.64	£987,153.40
ORODISPERSIBLE TABLET	£2,110.35	£2,006.88	£1,477.31	£1,137.30	£972.98	£480.35	£8,185.18
SPRAY	£1,338.62	£1,070.50	£981.74	£798.88	£863.75	£284.31	£5,337.80
Intravenous Injection	£345.60	£0.00	£1,036.80	£0.00	£345.60	£345.60	£2,073.60
Grand Total	£413,282.01	£474,070.30	£525,174.10	£632,689.20	£661,289.10	£312,459.63	£3,018,964.34

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Number of Patients	Year						
Formulation	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
EFFERVESCENT TABLET	1254	1103	1277	1195	1270	830	6929
ORAL CAPSULE	2204	1854	1644	2315	1520	1166	10703
ORAL SOLUTION	1949	1113	510	477	418	173	4640
ORAL SUSPENSION	18821	19184	24135	23668	26585	14698	127091
ORAL TABLET	49311	50517	52092	77209	59290	43694	332113
ORODISPERSIBLE TABLET	11	6	6	7	11	8	49
SUPPOSITORY	239	261	398	320	326	184	1728
Grand Total	73789	74038	80062	105191	89420	60753	483253

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Spending	Year						
Formulation	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Grand Total
EFFERVESCENT TABLET	£58,500.12	£53,673.81	£63,962.09	£79,823.02	£73,519.60	£40,668.44	£370,147.07
ORAL CAPSULE	£80,848.83	£76,292.51	£66,697.50	£69,960.12	£74,602.75	£33,644.84	£402,046.55
ORAL SOLUTION	£4,605.88	£2,036.58	£1,110.88	£4,965.42	£5,693.63	£2,064.13	£20,476.52
ORAL SUSPENSION	£359,162.46	£388,009.76	£486,164.64	£880,970.37	£1,092,670.44	£514,820.15	£3,721,797.82
ORAL TABLET	£944,192.21	£1,018,658.94	£1,014,087.91	£1,115,056.85	£1,250,967.25	£617,627.74	£5,960,590.90
ORODISPERSIBLE TABLET	£701.97	£385.72	£162.31	£816.39	£1,196.43	£1,080.89	£4,343.71
SUPPOSITORY	£29,602.12	£32,950.60	£40,691.95	£39,378.43	£31,775.35	£15,391.32	£189,789.77
Intravenous Infusion	£19,991.62	£23,376.43	£26,268.56	£26,033.06	£28,362.67	£12,978.66	£137,011.00
Grand Total	£1,497,605.20	£1,595,384.34	£1,699,145.84	£2,217,003.65	£2,558,788.12	£1,238,276.17	£10,806,203.33