

There is so much we don't know in medicine that could make a difference, and often we focus on the big things, and the little things get forgotten. To highlight some smaller but important issues, we've put together a series of pearls that the Red Whale found at the bottom of the ocean of knowledge!

A GP Update Pearl from the We Love Our GPs Team.

Travelling with medication – what advice (if any!) should we be giving our patients?

“The everyday medicines that could land you in prison if you take them on holiday” (The Mirror, 14 November 2017)

Laura Plummer, a British tourist, is currently in an Egyptian prison following her arrest for carrying tramadol into Egypt without a permit. This case has recently caused controversy in the mainstream media.

Many practices offer travel clinics, often as a private service run by practice nurses. So, what advice, if any, should we be giving to our patients about this issue?

What to tell the patient?

All medication

It is the patient's responsibility to establish the rules for their destination, airline and any country they are travelling through. These may all be different!

They need to remember prescribed AND over-the-counter medications. *(In some areas, common over-the-counter medications such as nasal decongestant inhalers (VICKS to you and I) and cough linctus are banned.)*

Patients should do this well in advance:

- Local regulations (e.g. in Turkey, China and Singapore) may require them to get a licence for carriage of ANY personal medication.
- They may need a doctor's letter *and to get this translated by an authorised body* for any medication to be carried.

Controlled drugs

Even travelling within Europe may require some care if your patient is using controlled drugs:

- Government advice is that a patient must be able to prove controlled medication belongs to them to travel into or out of the UK.
- This requires a letter outlining use and countersigned by 'the person who prescribed the drugs'.
- If carrying more than 3 months' supply, they will also need a Home Office licence: <https://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs>

Could you alert patients to this on your practice website or travel forms to save time in clinic?

What do we do?

While a letter may be required for travel, this is not an NHS service. Primary care can charge patients for the time taken to write the letter, or can decline to provide a letter and direct patients to private travel clinics for this service.

So, if as a team you decide to provide these letters, what should we include?

- The name of the patient and their passport number.
- Travel plans – dates of travel to each destination, including flight details.
- The name of their prescribed drugs.
- Total quantity and dose: specify correct amount needed for travel.
- Information on whether the medication will be required DURING the flight.

Requests for extra supplies of medication for patients who wish to travel abroad

If a patient is going to be abroad for more than 3 months, all that he or she is entitled to at NHS expense is a sufficient supply of his/her regular medication to get to the destination and find an alternative supply of that medication abroad.

GPs are not responsible for the prescribing of 'just in case' items for conditions which may arise while abroad or traveling.

We've created a suggested Patient Travel Letter (see below) for you to download and use at your surgery. This letter will help list all medication required through the period of travel, and can be stamped by the surgery.

We make every effort to ensure the information in these pages is accurate and correct at the date of publication, but it is of necessity of a brief and general nature, and this should not replace your own good clinical judgement, or be regarded as a substitute for taking professional advice in appropriate circumstances. In particular check drug doses, side effects and interactions with the British National Formulary. Save insofar as any such liability cannot be excluded at law, we do not accept any liability for loss of any type caused by reliance on the information in these pages.

PRACTICE NAME
ADDRESS
POSTCODE

DATE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

My patient, name: _____ DOB: _____, is prescribed regular medications which are required for travel.

Passport Number: _____

<u>Date of travel</u>	<u>Destination</u>	<u>Flight details</u>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Current prescribed medication:

- INCLUDE TOTAL QUANTITY AND DOSE
- SPECIFY AMOUNT NEEDED FOR TRAVEL

DELETE AS APPROPRIATE:

This medication does/does not include injectables and needles/syringes.

DELETE AS APPROPRIATE:

This medication will/will not be required within the aircraft cabin during flights.

Many thanks

SIGNATURE