This module will help practices in England, Wales and Scotland understand the prescribing and dispensing implications of appliances.

**Aims**

By the end of this article practices will be able:

- To understand the considerations when choosing to partner with a dispensing appliance contractor
- To understand the process of using a DAC
- To know where to find reimbursement information in the drug tariffs

**What’s allowed?**

The drug tariffs for England and Wales, and Scotland list the only allowable appliances.

For example, in England and Wales, Part IX of the Drug Tariff lists three types of allowable appliance:

**Part IX(A)** lists a variety of appliances, including:

- dressings
- hosiery, and compression bandaging
- catheter appliances (including catheter accessory and maintenance solution)
- laryngectomy or tracheostomy appliances
- anal irrigation systems
- vacuum pumps or constrictor rings for erectile dysfunction

- wound drainage pouches.

**Part IX(B)** Incontinence appliances including sheaths and catheter bags

**Part IX(C)** Stoma appliances

In Scotland the relevant sections of the drug tariff are:

- Part 3: various appliances
- Part 5: Incontinence appliances

Stoma appliances and accessories are listed online at: [http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Prescribing-and-Medicines/StomaSupplies/](http://www.isdscotland.org/Health-Topics/Prescribing-and-Medicines/StomaSupplies/)

All prescribers and dispensers should note that products that not included in the drug tariffs are not prescribable.

Prescribers’ attention is drawn to the average life-in-use of each type of product. Together with the pack-size, this should enable prescribers to calculate their patients’ requirements with reasonable accuracy.

**Using a DAC**

As the name suggests, a Dispensing Appliance Contractor is a contractor that specialises in dispensing appliances, including customisation.

Due to the preferential dispensing payment structure available to a DAC (and to a pharmacy), compared to that available to a dispensing GP, most DACs and dispensing GP practices are willing to work in partnership.

If a practice does not partner with a DAC and chooses to dispense the appliance itself, the practice will receive only the standard dispensing fee, and reimbursement at cost, minus clawback (typically 11.18%).

In most cases the absence of significant supplier discounts on appliances will make this option loss-making.

To partner with a DAC, the GP dispensary must obtain the patient’s consent for their script to be sent to another dispensing contractor. Once given, the prescription is sent to the agency, which then provides the item, paying the practice an agency fee usually equivalent to the dispensing fee and a payment related to the type of item.

Payment level rises from dressings, IX(C) appliances, stomas cut to size, to intermittent self-catheterisation products.

A typical appliance order would go through the following pathway:

1. Patient requests appliance
2. Any changes or special arrangements are acted upon by the dispenser in consultation with the GP or nurses
3. The prescription is produced and signed
4. The dispenser checks product availability with agency supplier
5. The full order is made by 5pm, and the prescription supplied
6. Agency customises products as required
7. Delivery is made to the practice for collection/delivery direct to the patient’s home.
Now, test your knowledge

1. What do the initials DAC stand for?
   a) Dispensing Appliance Contractor
   b) Dispensary Appliance Check
   c) Dispensing Accuracy Checker

2. When prescribing quantities of an appliance which of the following factors is not a key consideration?
   a) Average life-in-use of the product
   b) Pack size
   c) Prescription charges payable by the patient

3. With the correct endorsement, appliances that are not listed in the drug tariffs will still be reimbursed?
   a) True
   b) False

4. Where in the drug tariff for England and Wales will dispensers find the allowable incontinence appliances?
   a) Part IX(A)
   b) Part IX(B)
   c) IX(C)

5. In Scotland stoma appliance information included in the drug tariff?
   a) True
   b) False

6. A DAC can dispense and supply an appliance order to a patient’s home directly?
   a) True
   b) False

7. To use a DAC partner, the GP dispensary must obtain the patient’s consent for their script to be sent to another dispensing contractor?
   a) True
   b) False

8. All appliances attract the same item payment?
   a) True
   
   False

9. A GP practice dispensary will receive the same dispensing fee as a pharmacy or DAC for dispensing an appliance?
   a) True
   b) False

10. Dispensing appliances is usually profitable for the practice dispensary to do itself?
    a) True
    b) False

Information on dispensary quality will be covered in the next module.

Once you have finished, please return to the online main menu for this module to access the answers.

If you have answered at least eight questions correctly, you can print off a certificate of assessment. This can also be found in the online main menu for this module.

Good luck!