



Prescriptions dispensed in the community in Wales, 2016

24 May 2017
SFR 56/2017

The statistics in this release cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists (including supermarket pharmacies) during 2016. This includes appliance contractors and dispensing doctors in Wales, including items personally administered.

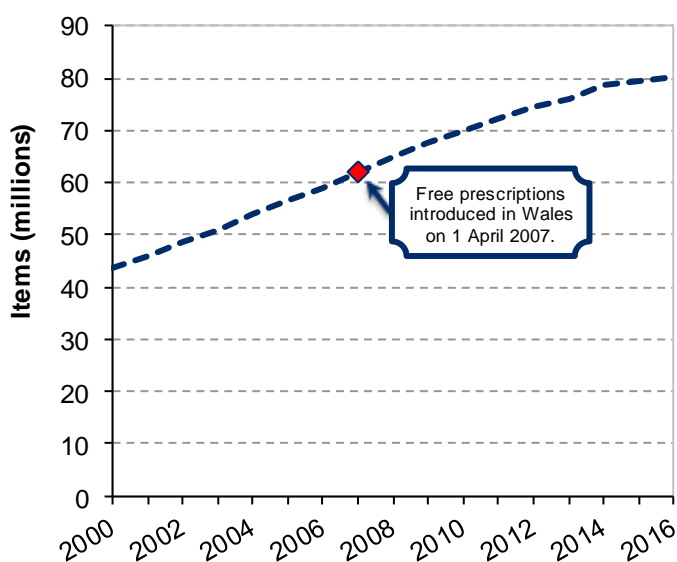
The vast majority are written by General Medical Practitioners in Wales; however prescriptions written by nurses, dentists and hospital doctors are also included provided they were dispensed in the community. Also included are prescriptions written in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man but dispensed in Wales. The analyses do not include prescriptions written in Wales but dispensed outside Wales.

Additional summary tables, covering all years from 2000 to 2016, including BNF chapter, section and sub-paragraph summaries, are available on the [website](#).

We also publish a statistical release on '[Prescriptions prescribed by GPs](#)'.

Monthly PCA data and updates to GP prescriptions data are also published on the [Prescribing Services](#) website.

Chart 1: Prescription items dispensed (millions)



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

- The number of prescription items dispensed in the community continued to rise - up 1.0% to 80.3 million in 2016 – equivalent to 25.9 items per head of population.
- The rate of increase has slowed in the last 2 years.

About this release

This release presents a summary of prescriptions dispensed in the community, and provides the annual Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) data, highlighting the main trends.

Prescription statistics published here are based on information obtained from prescriptions sent to [Prescribing Services, NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership](#) for payment. Please ensure that you read the explanatory notes accompanying the PCA data and also see the [Quality Report](#).

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Key facts

- The net ingredient cost of all prescriptions dispensed in the community during 2016 has decreased by 2.7% from 2015, to £578.0 million.
- Wales dispensed the highest number of prescription items per head of population* – 25.9 compared to 21.9 in Northern Ireland, 20.2 in England and 19.1 in Scotland.
- Medicines for the treatment of the cardiovascular system make up the largest group in terms of prescription items (23.5 million), but drugs for the treatment of the central nervous system make up the largest group in terms of cost (£121.6 million).
- Within the cardiovascular system chapter in 2016, almost 5.4 million items were dispensed in the Antihypertensive Therapy section, 5.1 million items in the Lipid-Regulating Drugs section and 3.5 million in the Nit, Calc Block and Other Antianginal Drugs section.
- Across all BNF chapters, Omeprazole was the most commonly prescribed chemical with 2.65 million items dispensed in 2016

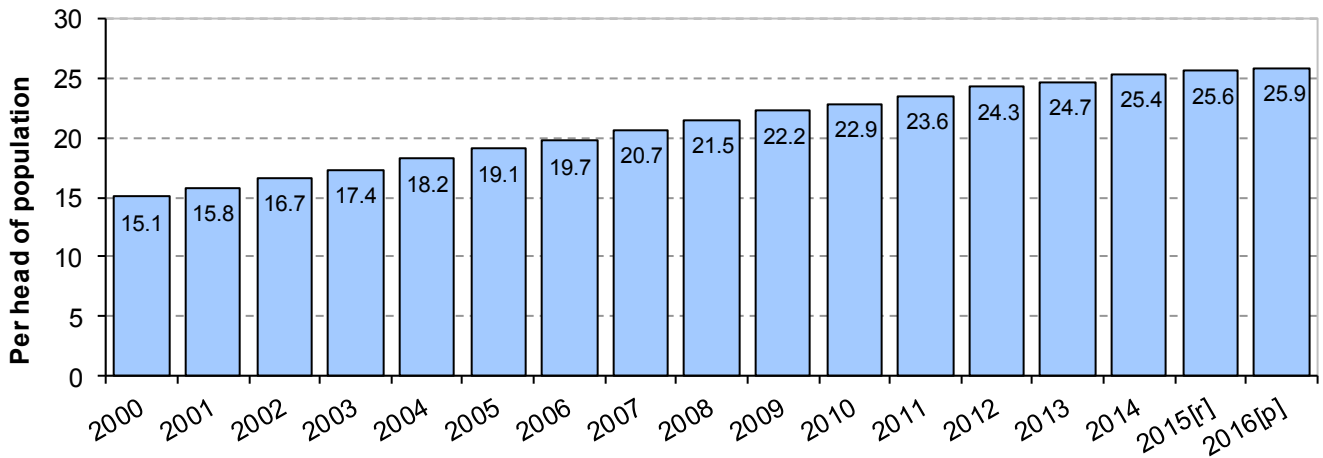
* Rates per head of population for 2016 are based on 2015 mid year estimates.

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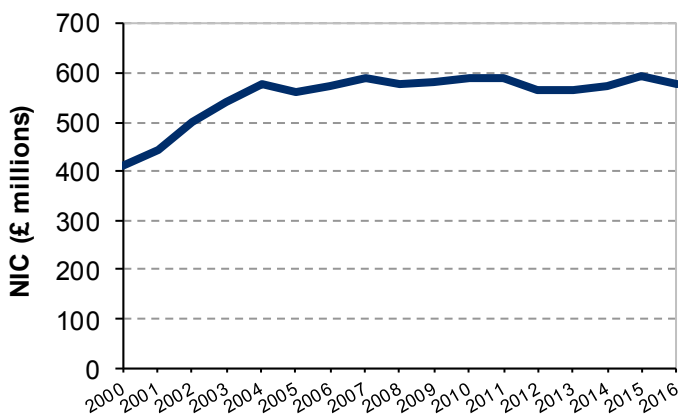
Chart 2: Prescription items dispensed per head of population

- In 2016 the number of prescription items dispensed per head of population was 25.9.
- The number of prescription items dispensed per head of population has increased by 6.2 (31%) over the last 10 years, and by 10.8 (83%) since 2000.



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

Chart 3: Net ingredient cost (£ millions) (a)

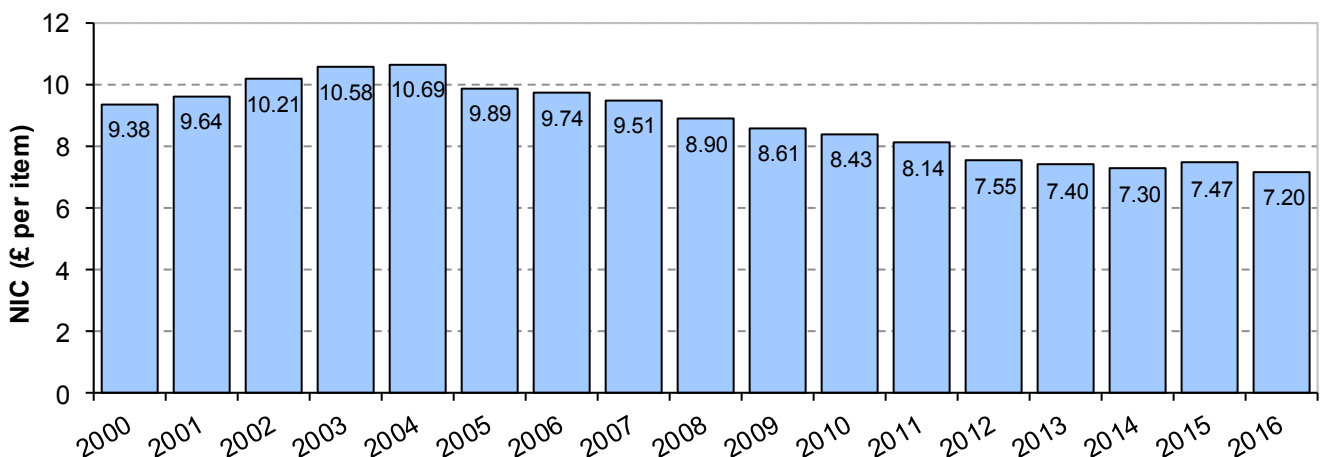


- In 2016 the net ingredient cost (NIC) of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales was almost £578.0 million, a decrease of £15.7 million (2.7%) from 2015.
- Between 2000 and 2016 the net ingredient cost increased by £167.5 million (40.8%).

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

Chart 4: Net ingredient cost per prescription item (£)

- In 2016 the net ingredient cost per prescription item was £7.20, 27p less than in 2015 and £2.18 less than in 2000.



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

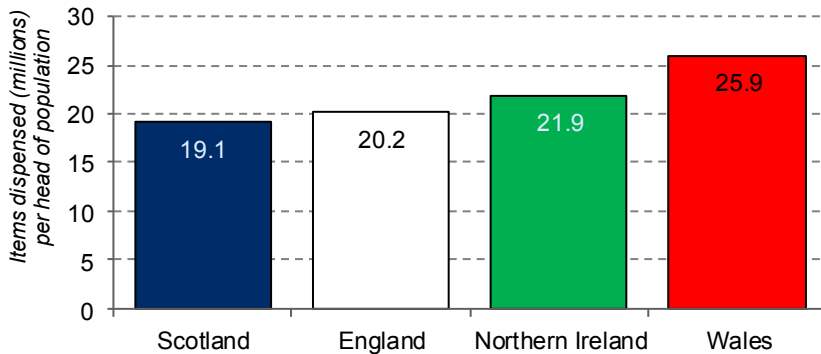
UK Comparisons - 2016 (a)

Charts 5-7 show the number of prescription items dispensed, the costs¹ per head of population and the cost per prescription item, in Wales compared with the other countries of the UK.

Until 2015, this data was published in the [Prescriptions by GPs](#) release.

¹ Net ingredient cost – see notes section at the end of the release.

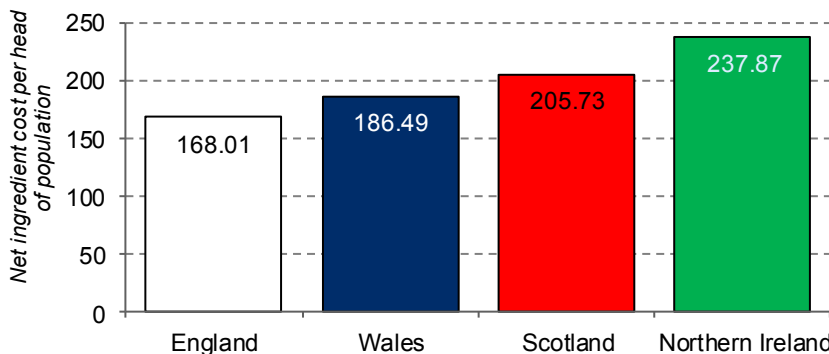
Chart 5: Prescription items dispensed per head of population, UK countries



Source: see note (a)

More prescription items per head of population were dispensed in Wales than any of the other UK countries: 25.9 in Wales, compared with 19.1 in Scotland, 20.2 in England and 21.9 in Northern Ireland.

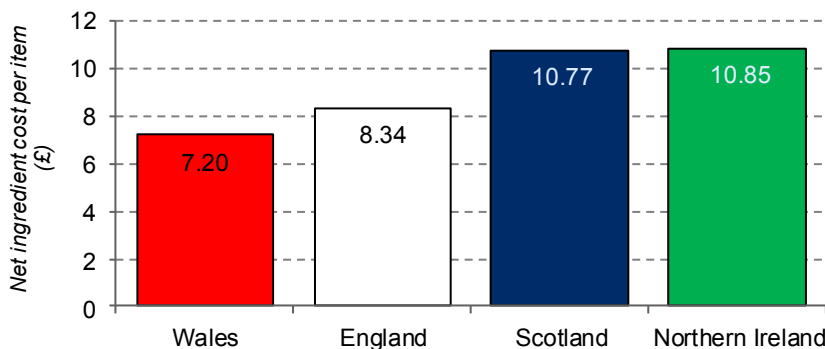
Chart 6: Net ingredient cost per head of population (£), UK countries



Source: see note (a)

The net ingredient cost (NIC) per head of population in Wales was higher than in England and Scotland, but lower than in Northern Ireland.

Chart 7: Net ingredient cost per prescription item (£), UK countries



Source: see note (a)

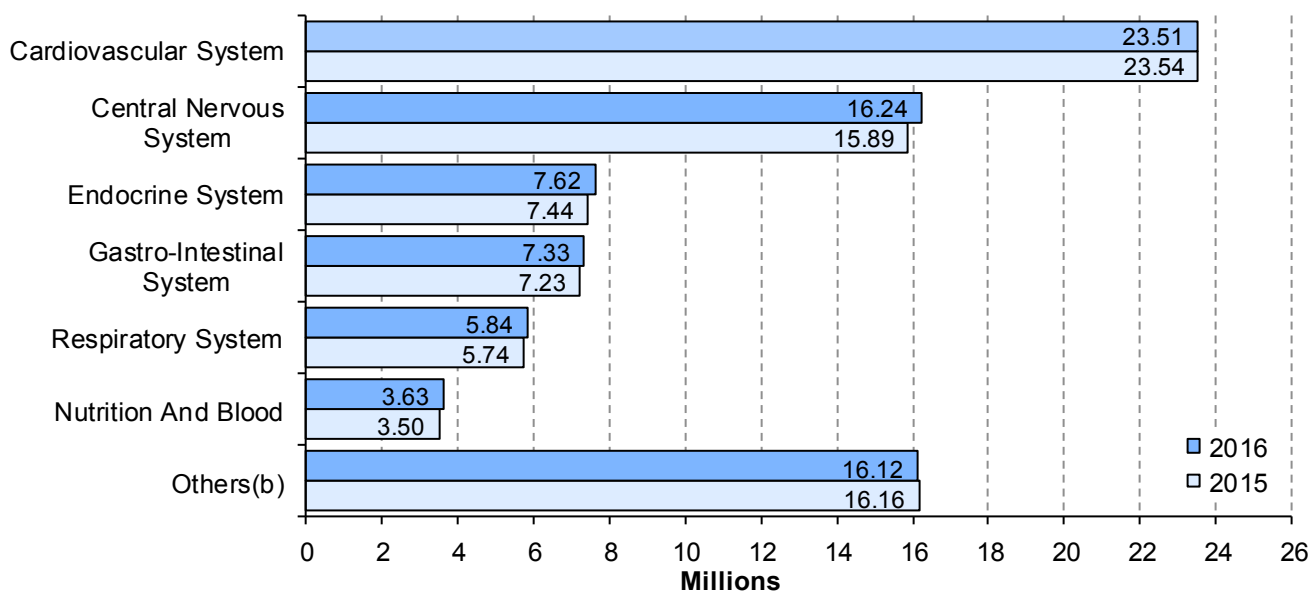
Wales has the lowest NIC per prescription item, at £7.20 compared with £8.34 in England, £10.77 in Scotland and £10.85 in Northern Ireland

(a) The PCA data covers all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacies, appliance contractors and dispensing doctors in Wales including items personally administered by GPs. The data refers to the financial year 2015-16 for Scotland, the calendar year 2015 for Northern Ireland and calendar year 2016 for England and Wales. These are the latest and most comparable data available. Please see notes on the use of PCA data in the Notes at the end of the release.

The population data used is the mid-year population estimates for 2016 rather than the population registered with a GP.

Chart 8: Items dispensed (millions) by leading BNF chapters, 2015 and 2016(a)

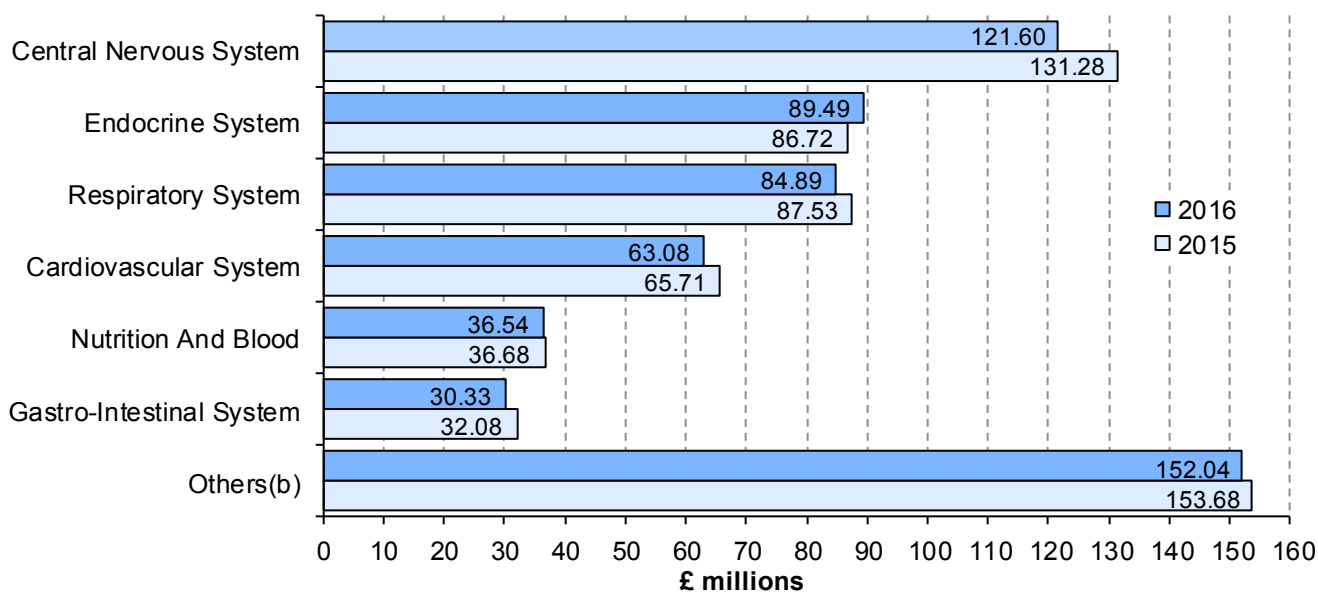
- In both years the leading chapter by item was 'cardiovascular system' – but as can be seen in Chart 9 below, it was only 4th by net ingredient cost.
- The six leading BNF chapters accounted for almost four fifths (79.9%) of the total items dispensed in 2016.



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

Chart 9: Net ingredient cost (£ millions) by leading BNF chapters, 2015 and 2016(a)

- In both years the leading individual chapter was 'central nervous system', but as can be seen in Chart 8 above, it was only 2nd by items dispensed.
- The six leading BNF chapters accounted for almost three quarters (73.7%) of the total net ingredient cost in 2016.



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

(a) See notes for definition of BNF and Net ingredient cost.

(b) See notes for definition of Others.

As seen in **Chart 8**, the cardiovascular system chapter has the highest number of items dispensed, accounting for 30% of all items. Items in this chapter include preparations for the management of arrhythmia (irregular heart rhythm), hypertension (high blood pressure), heart failure and high cholesterol.

The following tables and charts look at this chapter in more detail, including data on the sections of the chapter.

Chart 10: Cardiovascular system, items dispensed and net ingredient cost (NIC)

The total number of items dispensed in the cardiovascular system chapter has risen steadily since 2000, though the rate has slowed in recent years; in contrast, the net ingredient cost rose sharply until 2004, reaching more than £150 million, but has since fallen to £63.1 million in 2016.

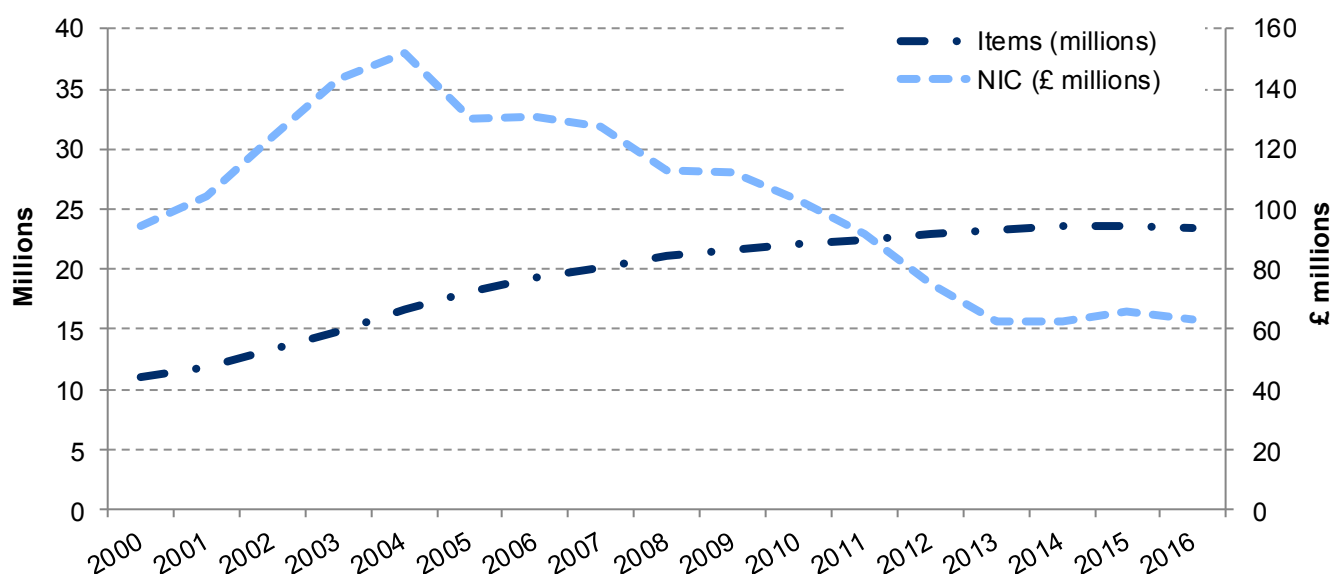


Table 1: Cardiovascular system, items dispensed by section in 2016, and 5, 10 and 15 years ago

BNF section name	2001	2006	2011	2016	Change since 2001
Anti-Arrhythmic Drugs	109,007	93,938	64,077	59,210	-46%
Anticoagulants And Protamine	440,852	611,722	808,113	1,195,859	171%
Antifibrinolytic Drugs & Haemostatics	19,732	24,439	33,060	33,293	69%
Antihypertensive Therapy	2,032,888	3,774,003	4,920,129	5,359,647	164%
Antiplatelet Drugs	1,619,129	2,716,355	2,904,815	2,587,180	60%
Beta-Adrenoceptor Blocking Drugs	1,504,628	2,110,414	2,322,227	2,691,396	79%
Diuretics	2,436,192	3,090,966	2,960,009	2,704,270	11%
Lipid-Regulating Drugs	1,124,052	3,626,038	4,787,763	5,112,390	355%
Local Sclerosants	35	25	14	5	-86%
Myocardial Infarction and Fibrinolysis	2	1			-100%
Nit, Calc Block & Other Antianginal Drugs (a)	2,286,017	2,891,515	3,314,414	3,538,346	55%
Positive Inotropic Drugs	350,272	356,616	283,792	224,337	-36%
Sympathomimetics	203	238	802	1,653	714%
TOTAL	11,923,009	19,296,270	22,399,215	23,507,586	97%

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

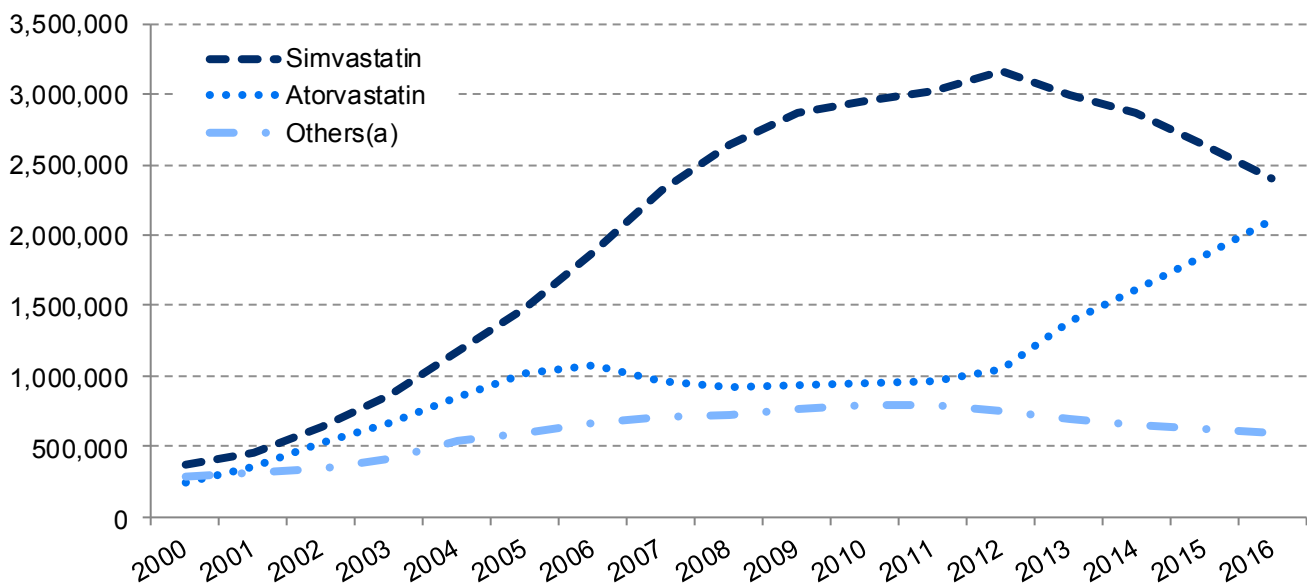
(a) section name has changed slightly over the years

- The total number of items dispensed in the cardiovascular system chapter has nearly doubled in the last 15 years, from almost 12 million in 2001 to 23.5 million in 2016.
- In 2016, almost 5.4 million items were dispensed in the Antihypertensive Therapy section, 5.1 million items in the Lipid-Regulating Drugs section and 3.5 million in the Nit, Calc Block and Other Antianginal Drugs section.
- Lipid-Regulating drugs (used primarily to treat high cholesterol) saw the biggest increase since 2001, with the number of items dispensed rising from just over 1.1 million to more than 3.6 million in the 5 years to 2006; while the increase has slowed since then, the last 5 years has still seen a rise of 7%.

Chart 11 shows the number of items dispensed by BNF chemical name in the lipid-regulating drugs section, which is one of the two largest sections among cardiovascular drugs, and which has also shown large increases over the last 16 years.

Note that simvastatin, atorvastatin and the other drugs in the section grouped together, each stood in 2000 at more or less the same level. Simvastatin then increased fairly rapidly until 2012 before tailing off; at the same time, prescriptions dispensed for atorvastatin increased, and almost doubled in the following few years, coinciding with the expiry of atorvastatin's patent in 2012.

Chart 11: Lipid-regulating drugs, items dispensed, 2000-2015



(a) Pravastatin Sodium, Rosuvastatin Calcium, Ezetimibe, Fenofibrate, Bezafibrate, Omega-3 Marine Triglycerides, Fluvastatin Sodium, Colestyramine, Ciprofibrate, Omega-3-Acid Ethyl Esters, Colesevelam Hydrochloride, Simvastatin & Ezetimibe, Gemfibrozil, Colestipol Hydrochloride, Acipimox, Nicotinic Acid, Ispaghula Husk, Clofibrate, Cholestyramine, Cerivastatin, Nicotinic Acid/Laropiprant and Other Preparations

- In 2000, almost 375,000 prescriptions for simvastatin were dispensed in Wales, accounting for 41% of the total in this section; this rose to a peak of more than 3 million in 2012, almost two thirds (64%) of the total, but has decreased in the last few years, to 2.4 million items in 2016 – this is however, still almost 50% of the total items dispensed in the section.
- Prescriptions for atorvastatin meanwhile, stood at nearly 250,000 (27% of the section) in 2000, and rose to stand at around 1 million items in each year between 2005 and 2012 (21% of the section total in 2012). Following the expiry of its patent, dispensing of atorvastatin has increased to more than 2.1 million items in 2016 (41% of the total).

The tables on the following pages provide additional information relating to prescriptions dispensed in the community.

[Table 2](#) details the total number of prescription items dispensed each year since 2000, the net ingredient cost, the cost per item, the number of items dispensed per head of population and the cost per head.

[Table 3](#) shows, for each BNF chapter, the prescription items dispensed in 2015 and 2016, the net ingredient cost, the number of items dispensed per head of population and the cost per head.

[Table 4](#) shows the Top 25 items dispensed by BNF chemical name (with the associated net ingredient cost), while [Table 5](#) shows the Top 25 items dispensed by net ingredient cost (with the associated number of items).

Table 2: Prescribing trends

Year	Items (millions)	Cost (£ millions)	Cost per item (£)	Items per head	Cost per head (£)
2000	43.8	410.4	9.38	15.1	141.19
2001	46.0	443.8	9.64	15.8	152.49
2002	48.8	498.1	10.21	16.7	170.42
2003	51.0	539.5	10.58	17.4	183.65
2004	54.0	577.0	10.69	18.2	195.12
2005	56.6	560.0	9.89	19.1	188.58
2006	58.9	574.0	9.74	19.7	192.24
2007	62.1	590.3	9.51	20.7	196.37
2008	65.1	578.8	8.90	21.5	191.30
2009	67.6	582.2	8.61	22.2	191.58
2010	69.8	588.8	8.43	22.9	193.06
2011	72.2	587.8	8.14	23.6	191.84
2012	74.6	563.8	7.55	24.3	183.40
2013	76.2	564.0	7.40	24.7	182.96
2014	78.5	573.4	7.30	25.4	185.46
2015	79.5	593.7	7.47	25.6 [r]	191.57 [r]
2016	80.3	578.0	7.20	25.9 [p]	186.49 [p]

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

[r] Revised using the 2015 mid year estimate of population.

[p] The 2016 figure is provisional as it is based on 2015 mid year estimate of population - see notes.

Table 3: Prescriptions dispensed by BNF Chapter, 2015 and 2016

BNF Chapter Name	Items (thousands)		Cost (£ thousands)		Cost per item (£)		Items per head	
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015[r]	2016[p]
Gastro-intestinal system	7,227	7,330	32,083	30,329	4.44	4.14	2.3	2.4
Cardiovascular system	23,535	23,508	65,707	63,077	2.79	2.68	7.6	7.6
Respiratory system	5,737	5,836	87,532	84,892	15.26	14.55	1.9	1.9
Central nervous system	15,886	16,240	131,284	121,596	8.26	7.49	5.1	5.2
Infections	3,113	3,031	17,998	17,131	5.78	5.65	1.0	1.0
Endocrine system	7,439	7,616	86,722	89,487	11.66	11.75	2.4	2.5
Obstetrics, gynae & urinary tract disorders	1,917	1,976	22,909	23,321	11.95	11.80	0.6	0.6
Malignant disease & immunosuppression	435	439	16,768	16,462	38.58	37.54	0.1	0.1
Nutrition and blood	3,498	3,625	36,683	36,536	10.49	10.08	1.1	1.2
Musculoskeletal & joint diseases	2,450	2,418	13,058	11,903	5.33	4.92	0.8	0.8
Eye	1,527	1,496	9,586	9,257	6.28	6.19	0.5	0.5
Ear, nose and oropharynx	1,012	1,023	5,838	5,832	5.77	5.70	0.3	0.3
Skin	2,553	2,479	18,944	18,480	7.42	7.45	0.8	0.8
Immunological products & vaccines	756	787	6,008	6,451	7.95	8.20	0.2	0.3
Anaesthesia	87	102	960	2,038	10.99	20.02	0.0	0.0
Preparations used in diagnosis	0	0	0	0	17.50	175.00	0.0	0.0
Other drugs and preparations	64	67	1,752	1,880	27.53	28.21	0.0	0.0
Dressings	536	468	8,917	7,758	16.64	16.59	0.2	0.2
Appliances	1,337	1,466	14,531	15,276	10.87	10.42	0.4	0.5
Incontinence appliances	133	134	3,502	3,417	26.26	25.51	0.0	0.0
Stoma appliances	239	235	12,909	12,832	54.12	54.53	0.1	0.1
Total	79,481	80,274	593,690	577,956	7.47	7.20	25.6	25.9

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

[r] Revised using the 2015 mid year estimate of population.

[p] The 2016 figure is provisional as it is based on 2015 mid year estimate of population - see notes.

. = not applicable

Table 4: Top 25 prescription items by BNF chemical name - items, 2016

BNF chemical name	Items	NIC(£)
Omeprazole	2,647,709	3,745,730
Simvastatin	2,408,101	2,285,249
Levothyroxine Sodium	2,390,177	6,418,035
Ramipril	2,190,380	3,008,266
Atorvastatin	2,104,126	2,876,583
Aspirin	1,947,884	1,550,282
Amlodipine	1,929,842	1,702,834
Co-Codamol (Codeine Phos/Paracetamol)	1,831,550	8,158,880
Salbutamol	1,780,069	4,266,515
Lansoprazole	1,656,678	2,222,428
Bisoprolol Fumarate	1,620,395	1,700,829
Paracetamol	1,397,568	4,236,976
Metformin Hydrochloride	1,383,238	5,950,671
Citalopram Hydrobromide	1,330,835	1,188,766
Bendroflumethiazide	1,022,507	797,155
Furosemide	992,592	930,697
Amitriptyline Hydrochloride	977,949	1,639,830
Warfarin Sodium	964,001	1,515,464
Beclometasone Dipropionate	946,170	12,649,239
Sertraline Hydrochloride	910,656	1,385,588
Ergocalciferol	897,896	2,857,498
Lisinopril	756,853	778,105
Amoxicillin	730,505	993,192
Ibuprofen	675,647	2,257,439
Mirtazapine	656,708	1,028,519

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

Table 5: Top 25 prescription items by net ingredient cost and BNF chemical name, 2016

BNF chemical name	NIC (£)	Items
Fluticasone Propionate (Inh)	25,128,361.28	618,542
Pregabalin	21,154,661.33	400,201
Budesonide	15,231,649.34	425,370
Tiotropium	13,178,094.49	381,818
Beclometasone Dipropionate	12,649,239.09	946,170
Enteral Nutrition	11,518,048.14	216,976
Glucose Blood Testing Reagents	11,027,305.20	452,436
Co-Codamol (Codeine Phos/Paracetamol)	8,158,880.41	1,831,550
Insulin Glargine	6,525,110.89	127,186
Levothyroxine Sodium	6,418,034.92	2,390,177
Metformin Hydrochloride	5,950,671.21	1,383,238
Hydrocortisone	5,922,443.26	410,031
Wound Management & other Dressings	5,876,054.98	310,047
Solifenacin	5,536,629.88	195,537
Insulin Aspart	5,223,188.82	123,077
Sitagliptin	4,930,869.88	150,413
Rivaroxaban	4,867,619.40	110,782
Mesalazine (Systemic)	4,619,131.73	91,642
Liraglutide	4,500,906.48	47,794
Influenza	4,466,742.12	650,339
Salbutamol	4,266,515.21	1,780,069
Colostomy Bags	4,254,955.90	21,033
Paracetamol	4,236,976.26	1,397,568
Leuprorelin Acetate	3,786,453.00	19,612
Omeprazole	3,745,729.70	2,647,709

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

NOTES: Details about the BNF classifications and classes are in the notes.

While many of these preparations will only be in one BNF chapter, it should be noted that some will appear in more than one BNF chapter.

Key quality information

Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) data are complex. The explanatory notes accompanying the data and the Quality Report are written to aid understanding and to avoid any misinterpretation of the figures.

Source

Prescription statistics published here are based on information obtained from prescriptions sent to Prescribing Services, [NHS Wales](#) Shared Services Partnership for payment. Data captured by Prescribing Services in the prescription pricing and remuneration process are also available on their website.

Coverage

The statistics cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists (including supermarket pharmacies), appliance contractors and dispensing doctors in Wales including items personally administered. The vast majority are written by General Medical Practitioners in Wales; however prescriptions written by nurses, dentists and hospital doctors are also included provided they were dispensed in the community. Also included are prescriptions written in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man but dispensed in Wales. The analyses do not include prescriptions written in Wales but dispensed outside Wales.

Prescribing Services, NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership have stated that due to the complex and manual processes involved there may be inaccuracies in capturing prescription information which are then reflected in the data. Internal quality assurance processes exist and currently the prescription processing activity is internally audited at around 99% accuracy (i.e. at least 99% of prescriptions are processed accurately).

Revisions

As the PCA data is published in May for the previous calendar year, the appropriate mid year estimates of population are not available. Consequently the previous year's population figures are used and revised in the following year's release.

Notes

BNF

The [British National Formulary \(BNF\)](#) is a joint publication of the British Medical Association and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. It is published biannually under the authority of a Joint Formulary Committee which comprises representatives of the two professional bodies and of the UK Health Departments.

Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme

The [Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme](#) is a voluntary agreement between the Department of Health and the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry. The scheme places some control on the costs of medicines to the NHS and applies to branded licensed medicines.

Category M

The [category M scheme](#) is an arrangement where the net ingredient cost for selected generic formulations is controlled, with the aim of reducing costs overall. Medicines subject to these arrangements are classified as category M in Part VIII of the Drug Tariff. The majority of these formulations have fallen in price, although some formulations have increased in price. These price adjustments have contributed to shifts in the relative positions of drug and affect overall cost per item.

Falling costs

Several factors have contributed to the fall in costs, notably changes to the price of many medicines under the category M scheme. Adjustments to prices under this scheme have seen dramatic changes to costs across therapeutic areas over recent years.

Other factors which have lowered costs include:

- lower use of some medicines;
- generic versions of some medicines becoming available;
- the fall in the price of some medicines outside of the category M scheme; and
- lower use of more costly formulations of some medicines.

PCA in electronic format:

The data are provided on the internet, accompanying this release, in a Microsoft Excel file. Users are advised to read the explanatory notes. The prescription items dispensed are listed alphabetically within British National Formulary (BNF) therapeutic class, chapters, sections, sub-paragraphs, chemicals, products and individual preparations.

No exclusions on the basis of numbers of prescription items dispensed have been made. The Excel file therefore includes these totals for the following 6 levels of aggregation:

- a) Overall total
- b) BNF chapter
- c) BNF section
- d) BNF sub paragraph
- e) BNF product
- f) Chemical entity
- g) Individual preparation

Exact costs and numbers of items are provided but we would recommend that any data extracted for use are presented in a rounded form.

Definitions

Therapeutic classification

PCA data are based currently on the therapeutic grouping used in the British National Formulary. The classification in this report is based on the September 2016 BNF.

NHS Prescription Services have created pseudo-BNF chapters, for items that cannot be found in BNF chapters 1 to 15. The majority of these items are dressings and appliances, which NHS Prescription Services have classified into four pseudo-BNF chapters (20 to 23). However some gel and colloid dressings that are classified as drugs are included in a pseudo section within BNF 13 (13.13). NHS Prescription Services have produced a booklet on [BNF classifications and the pseudo classifications](#).

Examples of the conditions covered by each group (unless group is self-explanatory) are given below:

- **Gastro-intestinal system:** including preparations for the management of indigestion, diarrhoea, constipation, haemorrhoids, ulcerative colitis and Crohn's disease
- **Cardiovascular system:** including preparations for the management of arrhythmia (irregular heart rhythm), hypertension (high blood pressure), heart failure and high cholesterol
- **Respiratory system:** including preparations for the management of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis, allergies, cough and congestion
- **Central nervous system:** including preparations for the management of anxiety, sleeplessness, depression, pain, epilepsy, substance misuse, Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease
- **Infections:** including preparations for the treatment of infection
- **Endocrine system:** including preparations for the management of diabetes, an under or over active thyroid gland and other hormonal conditions
- **Obstetrics, gynaecology and urinary tract disorders:** including contraceptives and preparations used in obstetrics
- **Malignant disease and immunosuppression:** including preparations for the treatment and management of cancer and conditions affecting the immune system
- **Nutrition and blood:** vitamins, minerals and prescribed foods
- **Musculoskeletal and joint disorders:** including preparations for the management of rheumatoid arthritis and gout, myasthenia gravis, spasticity and topical treatments for pain
- **Eye:** including preparations for the treatment and management of eye infections and glaucoma
- **Ear, nose and oropharynx:** including preparations for the treatment and management of conditions affecting the ear, nose and throat
- **Skin:** including preparations for the treatment and management of eczema, psoriasis, acne, warts and verrucae
- **Immunological products and vaccines:** including preparations for the treatment of anaemia, vitamin preparations and supplements
- Anaesthesia
- Preparations used in diagnosis
- Other drugs and preparations
- Dressings

- Appliances
- Incontinence supplies
- Stoma appliances

A full list of the therapeutic classes (BNF chapters) and their sub groups are shown in the following table.

Gastro-intestinal System

Antacids
Antispasmodic and other drugs altering gut motility
Ulcer healing drugs
Antidiarrhoeal drugs
Treatment of chronic diarrhoeas
Laxatives
Preparations for haemorrhoids
Stoma care
Drugs affecting intestinal secretions

Cardiovascular System

Positive inotropic drugs
Diuretics
Anti-arrhythmic drugs
Beta-adrenoceptor blocking drugs
Antihypertensive therapy
Nitrates and other vasodilators, and calcium channel blockers
Sympathomimetics
Anticoagulants and protamine
Antiplatelet drugs
Antifibrinolytic drugs and haemostatics
Lipid-lowering drugs
Local sclerosants

Respiratory System

Bronchodilators
Corticosteroids
Cromoglycate and related therapy
Allergic disorders
Oxygen
Mucolytics
Aromatic inhalations
Cough preparations
Systemic nasal decongestants

Central Nervous System

Hypnotics and anxiolytics
drugs used in psychoses and related disorders
Antidepressant drugs
Central nervous system stimulants
Appetite suppressants
Drugs used in nausea and vertigo
Analgesics
Antiepileptics
Drugs used in parkinsonism and related disorders
Drugs used in substance dependence
Drugs used in Alzheimer's disease

Infections

Antibacterial drugs
Antifungal drugs
Antiviral drugs
Antiprotozoal drugs
Anthelmintics

Endocrine System

Drugs used in diabetes
Thyroid and antithyroid drugs
Corticosteroids
Sex hormones
Hypothalamic and pituitary hormones and antioestrogens
Other endocrine drugs

Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Urinary Tract Disorders

Drugs used in obstetrics
Treatment of vaginal and vulval conditions
Contraceptives
Drugs used for genito-urinary disorders

Malignant Disease and Immunosuppression

Cytotoxic drugs
Drugs affecting the immune response
Sex hormones and hormone antagonists in malignant disease

Nutrition and Blood

Anaemias and other blood disorders
Fluids and electrolytes
Oral nutrition
Minerals
Vitamins
Bitters and tonics
Metabolic disorders
Foods
Compound vitamin / mineral formulations
Health supplements
Other health supplements

Musculoskeletal and Joint Disorders

Drugs used in rheumatic diseases and gout
Drugs used in neuromuscular disorders
Drugs used for relief of soft tissue inflammation

Eye

Anti-infective eye preparations
Corticosteroids and other anti-inflammatory preparations
Mydriatics and cycloplegics
Treatment of glaucoma
Local anaesthetics
Miscellaneous ophthalmic preparations
Contact lenses

Ear, Nose and Oropharynx

Drugs acting on the ear
Drugs acting on the nose
Drugs acting on the oropharynx

Skin

Vehicles and emulsifying agents
Emollient and barrier preparations
Local anaesthetics and antipruritics
Topical corticosteroids
Preparations for eczema and psoriasis
Preparations for acne
Preparations for warts and calluses
Sunscreens and camouflagers
Shampoos and some other scalp preparations
Anti-infective skin preparations
Disinfectants and cleansers
Antiperspirants
Wound management products
Topical circulatory preparations
Miscellaneous topical preparations

Immunological Products and Vaccines

Vaccines and antisera
Immunoglobulins

Anaesthesia

General anaesthesia
Local anaesthesia

Preparations used in Diagnosis

X-ray contrast media

Other Drugs and Preparations

Dressings

Appliances

Incontinence Supplies

Stoma Appliances

Drug name

The drug is shown by individual preparation name, which may be proprietary (trade name) or generic (chemical name), followed by form and strength. The names used are often presented in an abbreviated form.

Items dispensed

A prescription item refers to a single item prescribed by a doctor (or dentist) on a prescription form. If a prescription form includes three items it is counted as three prescription items. A prescription item may be for a variable quantity eg 14, 28 or 56 tablets. A prescription item consists of a quantity of tablets or other preparation. This means that the cost per item does not equate to the cost, for example, per tablet or per pack of tablets but to the average number of packs prescribed per item.

Cost: Net Ingredient Cost (NIC)

NIC refers to the cost of the drug before discounts and does not include any dispensing costs or fees. It does not include any adjustment where the patient has purchased a pre-payment certificate.

Figures quoted for net ingredient cost for all years are unadjusted for inflation. Standard adjustments for inflation are not considered appropriate as drug prices are subject to controls under the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme and to other central controls.

No adjustment to NIC has been made to reflect payments to Welsh Government under the Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme.

“PropGenLink” code

This code is used in the PCA data and is a way of linking the brand to the generic for a given chemical ingredient and is derived from the first 9 and last 2 characters of the BNF code.

Quantity (QTY) (individual preparations only)

The quantity of a drug dispensed is measured in units depending on the formulation of the product. See standard quantity unit below. Quantities are not added together across preparations because of different strengths and formulations.

Standard quantity unit (SQU) (individual preparations only)

This code indicates the form of the drug and the units in which quantity is measured:

- Code 1 - a unit (e.g. one tablet, capsule, pack, aerosol etc)
- Code 3 - millilitres
- Code 6 - grammes
- Code 0 - individually formulated (unit varies)

Chart 8 Others

'Others' includes Infections, Obstetrics, Gynaecology & urinary tract disorders, Malignant disease & immunosuppression, Musculoskeletal & Joint Diseases, Eye, Ear, nose & oropharynx, Skin, Immunological products & vaccines, Anaesthesia, Preparations used in diagnosis, Other drugs & preparations, Dressings, Appliances, Incontinence appliances, and Stoma appliances.

Detailed data for other UK countries

Data for other UK countries can be accessed via the following web pages:

England: [Prescriptions Dispensed in the Community](#)

Scotland: [Prescribing and Medicines/Publications](#)

Northern Ireland: [Pharmaceutical statistics](#)

Note that varying prescribing practice may affect the interpretation of UK country comparisons. An example of this relates to the prescribing interval and how it appears to be shorter in Wales than other UK countries resulting in lower dose units prescribed per prescription item in Wales and correspondingly higher items per head statistics for Wales. The issue is described in a [report from the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group](#) and is illustrated for a basket of cardiovascular medicines (administered once daily).

Below are summary details for England, Northern Ireland and Scotland PCA publications, taken from the details on their websites which existed at the time of this publication. These details represent our interpretation of what is available and should be taken as a guide only. Queries should be addressed to the responsible organisation - links to their websites are included above.

PCA in England published by NHS Digital

[PCA in England](#) is published by calendar year. NHS Digital publishes the data together with a statistical bulletin which provides analysis and comment on patterns and trends; both are available from the NHS Digital website. Coverage is similar to PCA in Wales in terms of type of dispensers and prescribers included and that all prescriptions included are those dispensed in England only.

The data fields published are:

- cost in NIC (equivalent to NIC in Wales)
- items
- quantity together with standard quantity unit and preparation class

All individual preparations are listed in the Excel version of the PCA data – no suppression of preparations which are rarely dispensed.

Figures are published at the following levels of aggregation:

- Overall total
- BNF Chapter
- BNF Section
- BNF Paragraph
- BNF Sub – paragraph
- Chemical
- Individual preparations

PCA in Northern Ireland (NI) published by Business Services Organisation

[PCA in Northern Ireland](#) is published by calendar year. Coverage is assumed to be similar to PCA in England and Wales in terms of type of dispensers and prescribers included and that all prescriptions included are those dispensed in NI only.

Fields are:

- Ingredient cost before discount
- items
- quantity

All individual preparations are listed – no suppression of preparations which are rarely dispensed.

Figures are published at the following levels of aggregation:

- BNF Chapter
- BNF Section
- Individual preparations

PCA in Scotland published by ISD Scotland

[PCA in Scotland](#) is published by financial year. Coverage is similar to PCA in England and Wales in terms of type of dispensers and prescribers included and that all prescriptions included are those dispensed in Scotland only.

Fields are

- Paid gross ingredient cost (equivalent to NIC, in Wales)
- Items
- quantity

Only individual preparations where more than 10 items were dispensed are listed.

Figures are published at the following levels of aggregation.

- BNF Chapter
- BNF Section
- BNF Sub – section
- Chemical
- Individual preparations

More detail about comparing PCA data from other UK countries is given in the [Quality Report](#).

Users and uses of these statistics

We believe the key users of prescription statistics are:

- Ministers and the Members Research Service in the National Assembly for Wales;
- Policy makers of the Welsh Government;
- Other government departments;
- National Health Service and Public Health Wales;
- Students, academics and universities;
- General Medical Council and other professional organisations;
- Individual citizens and private companies.

The statistics are used in a variety of ways. Some examples of the uses include:

- Advice to Ministers;
- To inform debate in the National Assembly for Wales and beyond.

National Statistics status

The [United Kingdom Statistics Authority](#) has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Act puts in place seven well-being goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the Well-being goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before the National Assembly. The 46 national indicators were laid in March 2016.

Information on indicators and associated technical information - [How do you measure a nation's progress? - National Indicators](#)

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local well-being assessments and local well-being plans.

Further details

The document is available at:

<http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/prescriptions-dispensed-community/?lang=en>

Next update

May 2018 (provisional)

We want your feedback

We welcome any feedback on any aspect of these statistics which can be provided by email to stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

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