

SDR 60/2016

18 May 2016

Prescriptions dispensed in the community in Wales, 2015

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](#).

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.

This release now includes UK comparisons previously published in the [Prescriptions by GPs](#) release.

Additional summary tables, covering all years from 2000 to 2015, including BNF chapter, section and sub-paragraph summaries are available on the [website](#).

We also publish a statistical release on [Prescriptions prescribed by GPs](#) in Wales. Monthly PCA data and updates to GP prescriptions data are also published on the [Prescribing Services](#) website.

Key Facts:

- The number of prescription items dispensed in the community continued to rise, increasing from 78.5 million in 2014 to 79.5 million in 2015 (up by 1.2%), equivalent to 25.7 items per head ([Table 2](#)).
- The net ingredient cost of all prescriptions dispensed in the community has increased by 3.5% since 2014, to £593.7 million in 2015 ([Table 2](#)).
- Wales dispensed the highest number of prescription items per head of population – 25.7 compared to 21.6 in Northern Ireland, 20.0 in England and 19.0 in Scotland ([Chart 5](#)).
- 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 (£131.3 million). ([Table 3](#))
- Within the cardiovascular system chapter, lipid regulating drugs were the section with the largest long-term increase, by item, up more than 460% since 2000 ([Table 1](#))
- Across all BNF chapters, Simvastatin was the most commonly prescribed chemical with 2.65 million items dispensed in 2015 ([Table 4](#))

Note: Rates per head of population for 2015 are based on 2014 mid year estimates.

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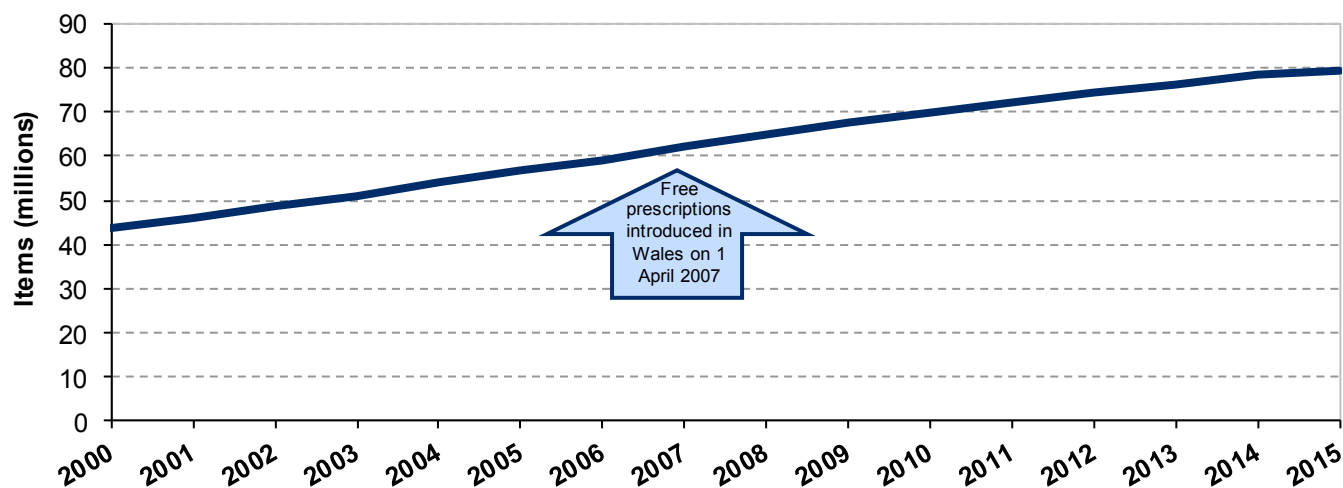
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Chart 1 shows the number of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales since 2000. The underlying data is available in [Table 2](#).

- ◆ In 2015 the number of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales was 79.5 million, an increase of 1.2% on 2014.
- ◆ Until 2008, annual percentage increases were around 5%; this slowed to less than 4% from 2009 to 2014, and to 1.2% in 2015.
- ◆ Between 2005 and 2015 the number of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales increased by 40%.

Chart 1: Prescription items dispensed (millions)

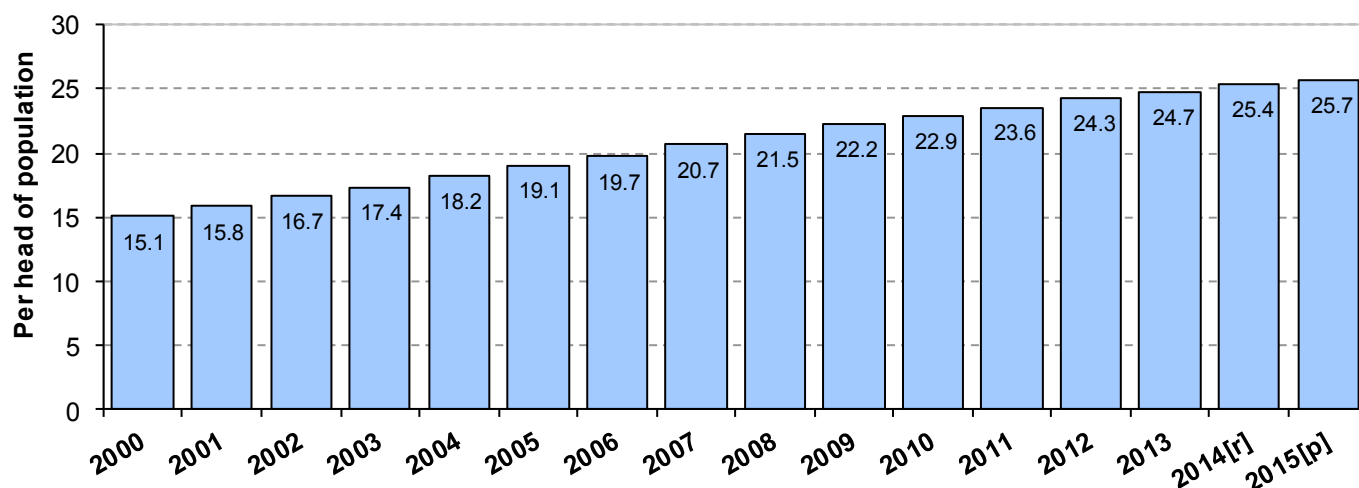


Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

Chart 2 shows the number of prescription items dispensed per head of population since 2000.

- ◆ In 2015 the number of prescription items dispensed per head of population was 25.7.
- ◆ In the last 10 years, the number of prescription items dispensed per head of population increased by 6.6 (35%).

Chart 2: Prescription items dispensed per head of population



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

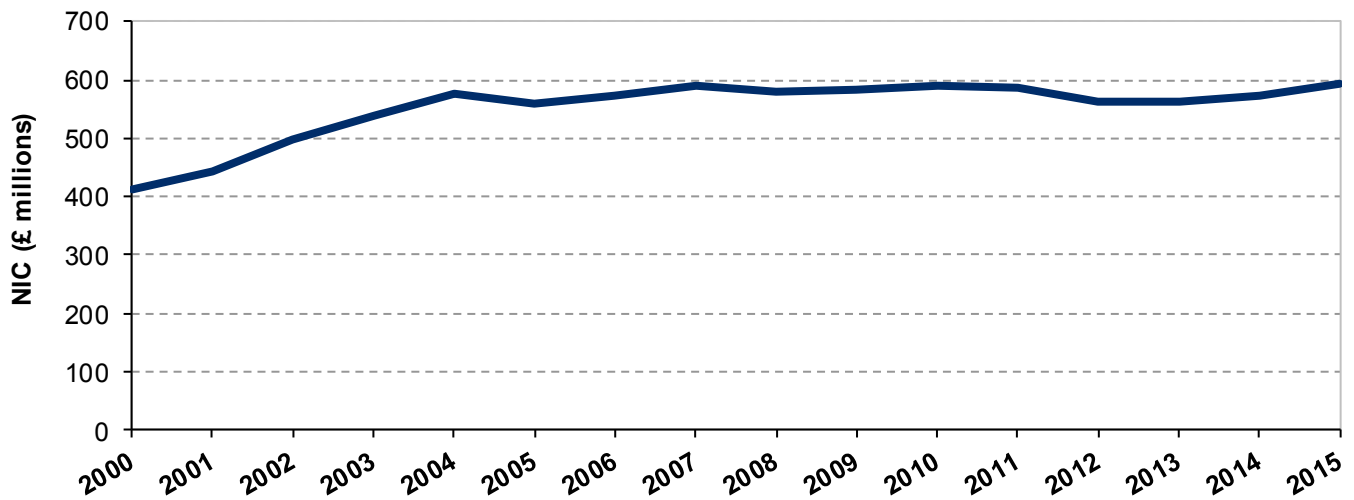
(r) Revised using 2014 mid year estimate of population.

(p) the 2015 figure is provisional as it is based on 2014 mid year estimate of population - see [notes](#).

Chart 3 shows the net ingredient cost of prescriptions items dispensed in the community from 2000 to 2015.

- ◆ In 2015 the net ingredient cost (NIC) of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales was almost £593.7 million, an increase of £20.25 million (3.5%) from 2014.
- ◆ Between 2000 and 2015 the net ingredient cost increased by £183.3 million (44.7%).

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



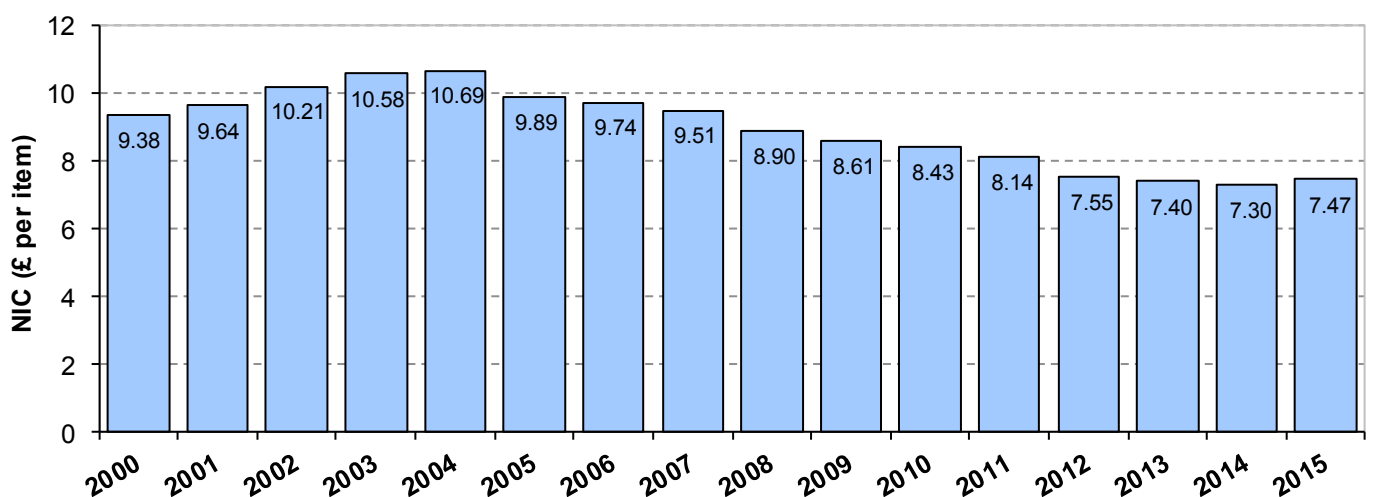
Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

(a) See notes for definition of [net ingredient cost](#).

Chart 4 shows the change in the net ingredient cost per prescription item since 2000.

- ◆ In 2015 the net ingredient cost per prescription item was £7.46, 16p more than in 2014 but £1.92 less than in 2000.
- ◆ After ten consecutive annual decreases, 2015 saw the first rise in net ingredient cost per item since 2004.

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



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

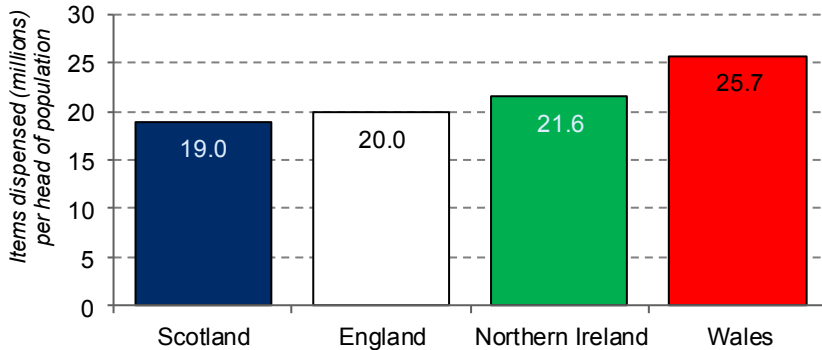
UK Comparisons - 2015 (a)

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.

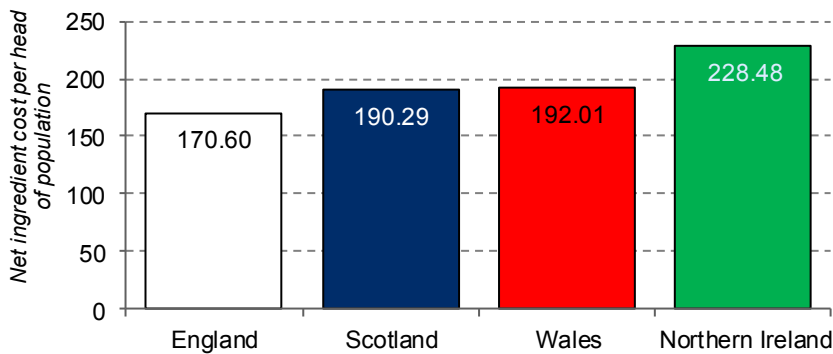
Chart 5: Prescription items dispensed per head of population, UK countries



Source: see note (a)

More prescription items per head of population were dispensed in Wales than any of the other UK countries: 25.7 in Wales, compared with 19.0 in Scotland, 20.0 in England and 21.6 in Northern Ireland.

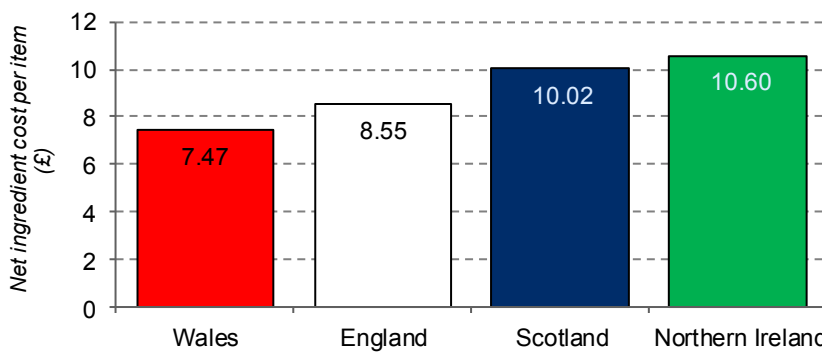
Chart 6: Net ingredient cost per head of population (£), UK countries



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 £7.47 compared with £8.55 in England, £10.02 in Scotland and £10.60 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 2014-15 for Scotland, the calendar year 2014 for Northern Ireland and calendar year 2015 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 2014 rather than the population registered with a GP.

Chart 8 shows the six leading British National Formulary (BNF) chapters in 2015 in terms of items dispensed, together with the equivalent number in 2014. See the full details in [Table 3](#).

- ◆ 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 (79.7%) of the total items dispensed in 2015.

Chart 8: Items dispensed (millions) by leading BNF chapters, 2014 and 2015(a)

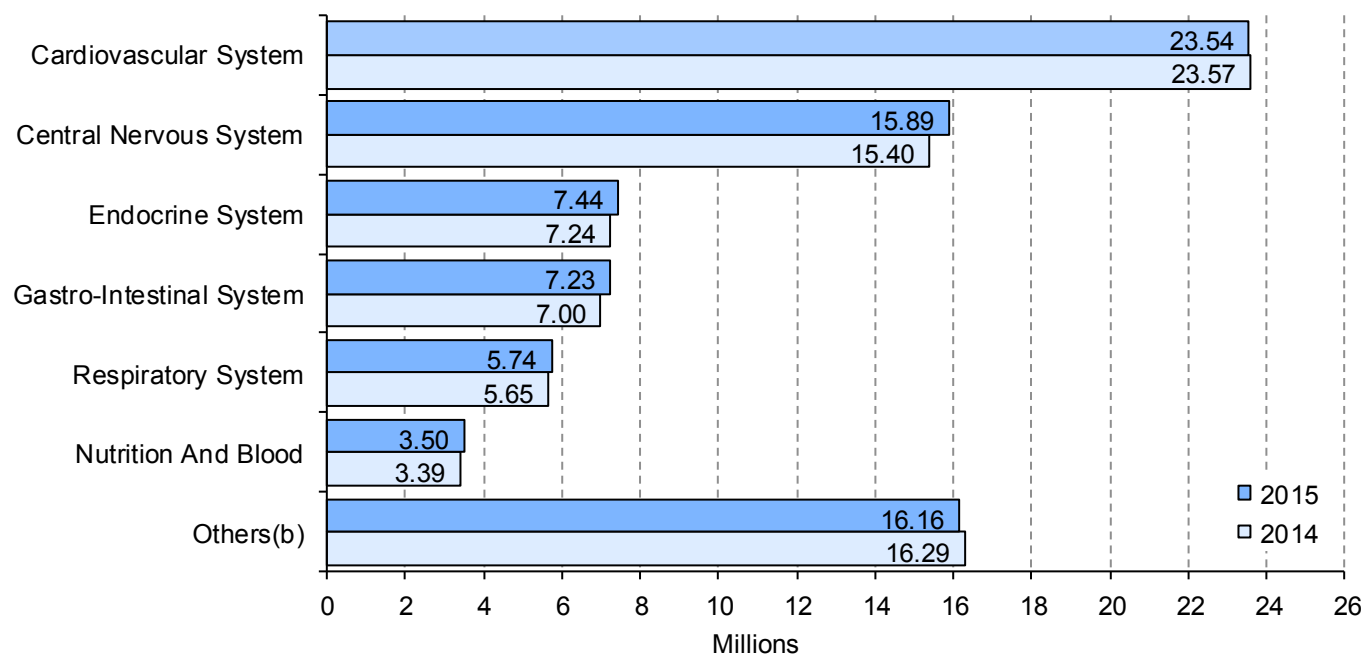
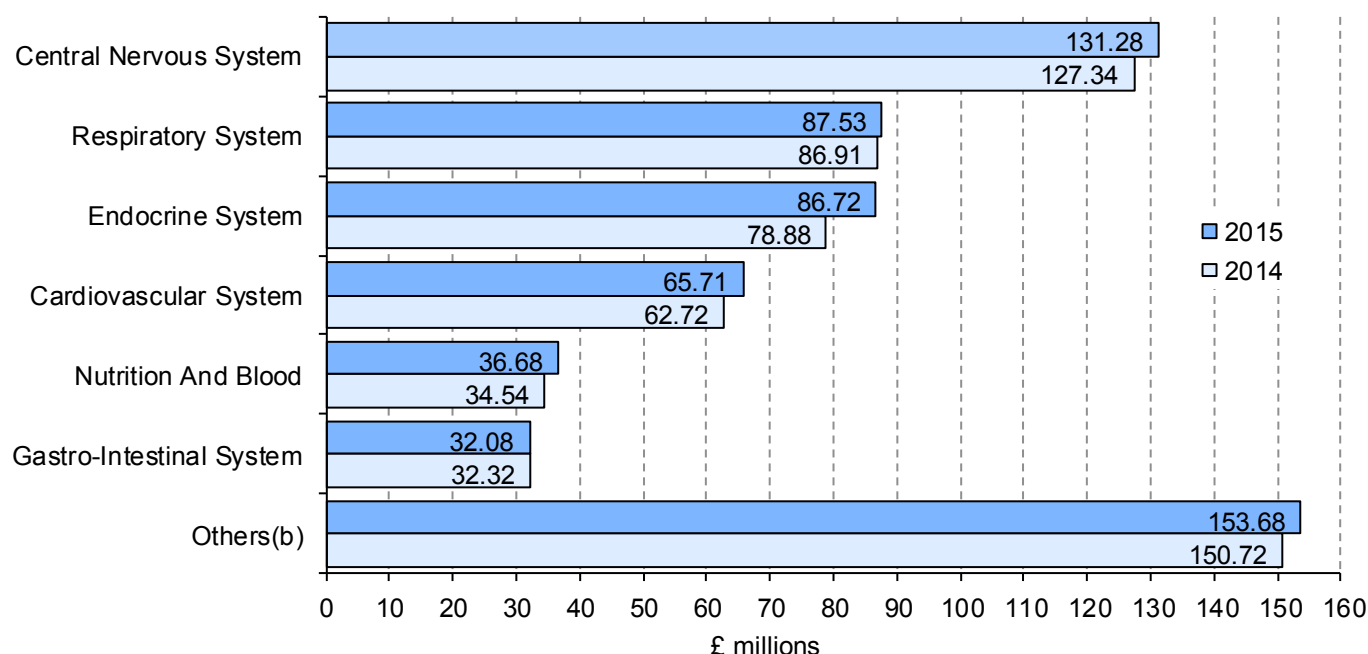


Chart 9 shows the six leading British National Formulary (BNF) chapters in 2015 in terms of net ingredient cost, together with the equivalent cost in 2014.

- ◆ In both years the leading 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 (74.1%) of the total net ingredient cost in 2015.

Chart 9: Net ingredient cost (£ millions) by leading BNF chapters, 2014 and 2015(a)



Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

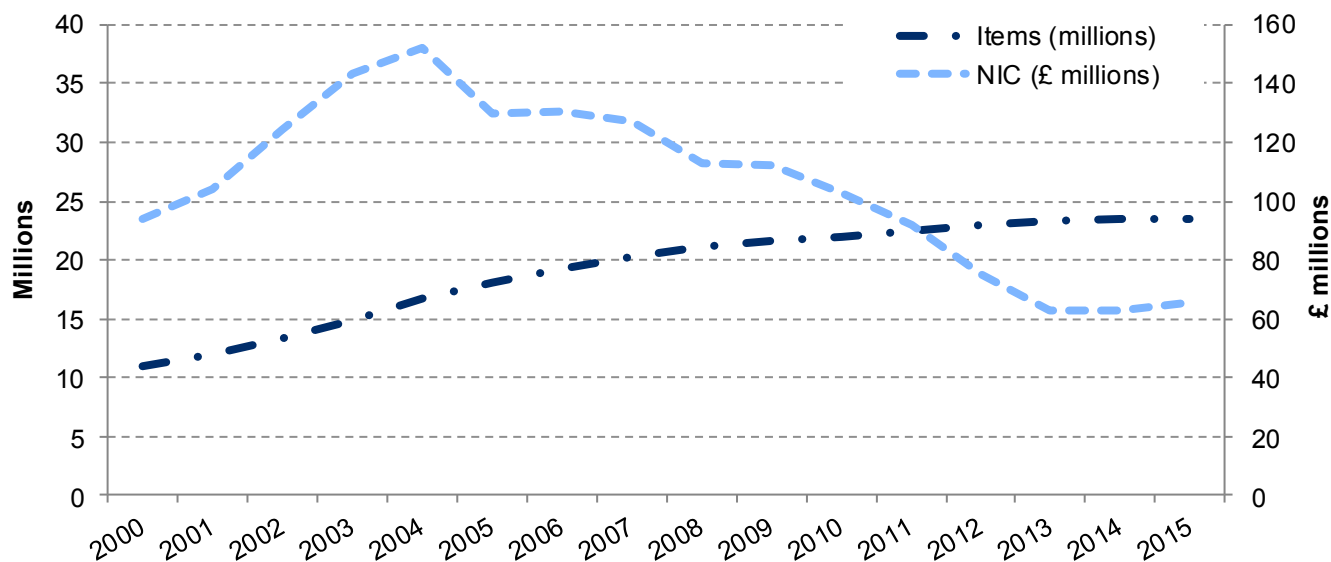
(a) See notes for definition of [BNF](#) and [Net ingredient cost](#).
 (b) See notes for definition of [Others](#).

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.

- ◆ 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 £65.7 million in 2015.

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



NOTE: items and NIC are plotted on different scales

- ◆ The total number of items dispensed in the cardiovascular system chapter has more than doubled in the last 15 years, from almost 11 million in 2000 to 23.5 million in 2015.
- ◆ In 2015, more than 5.3 million items were dispensed in the antihypertensive therapy section, and 5.1 million items in the lipid-regulating drugs section.
- ◆ Lipid-regulating drugs (used primarily to treat high cholesterol) also saw the biggest increase since 2000, with the number of items dispensed rising from just over 900,000 to more than 3 million (240%) in 2005; while the increase has slowed since then, the last 5 years has still seen a rise of 65%.

Table 1: Cardiovascular system, items dispensed by section in 2015, and 5, 10 and 15 years ago

BNF section name	2000	2005	2010	2015
Anti-Arrhythmic Drugs	104,875	99,230	68,295	59,701
Anticoagulants And Protamine	414,511	575,691	764,047	1,124,737
Antifibrinolytic Drugs & Haemostatics	18,956	22,819	30,727	33,672
Antihypertensive Therapy	1,806,078	3,441,999	4,781,167	5,324,374
Antiplatelet Drugs	1,468,343	2,563,211	2,933,186	2,696,384
Beta-Adrenoceptor Blocking Drugs	1,394,934	2,092,657	2,236,746	2,642,917
Diuretics	2,297,015	3,082,791	2,970,531	2,782,063
Lipid-Regulating Drugs	911,799	3,102,539	4,693,213	5,128,870
Local Sclerosants	28	72		2
Myocardial Infarction and Fibrinolysis	4	1	1	
Nit, Calc Block & Other Antianginal Drugs (a)	2,207,623	2,730,540	3,262,652	3,506,083
Positive Inotropic Drugs	346,045	361,538	295,875	235,429
Sympathomimetics	186	175	651	1,136
TOTAL	10,970,397	18,073,263	22,037,091	23,535,368

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

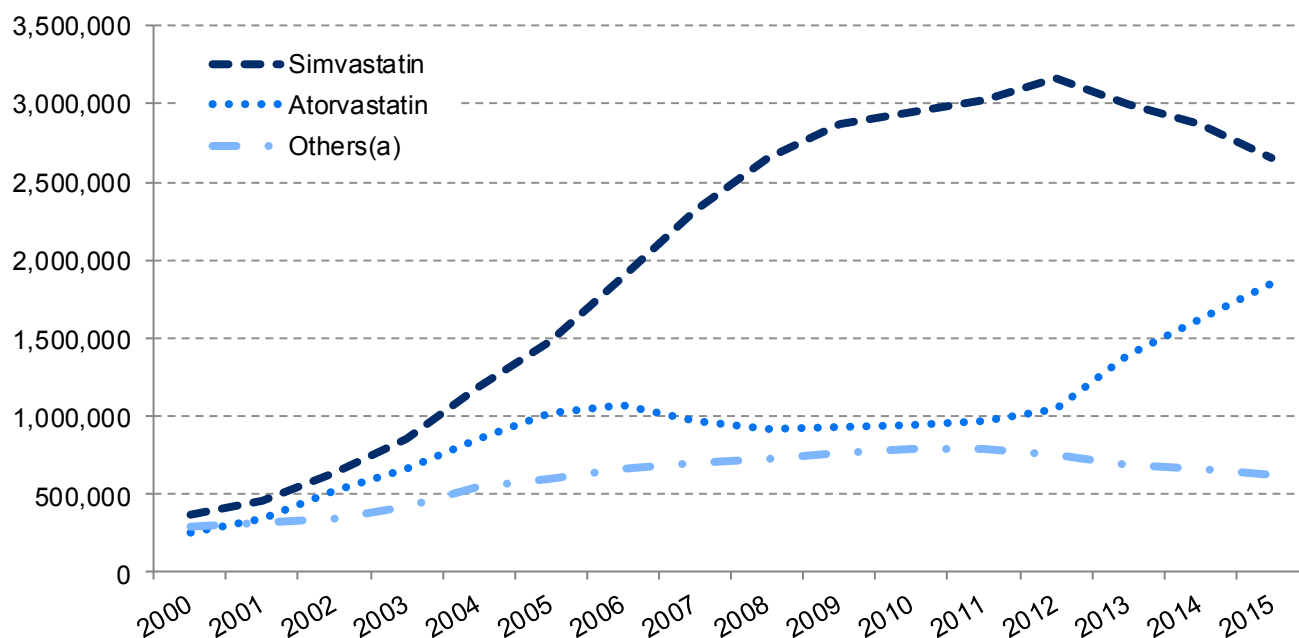
(a) section name has changed over the years covered.

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 15 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.

- ◆ 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 2.65 million items in 2015 – this is however, still more than 50% of the total items dispensed in the section.
- ◆ Prescriptions for **atorvastatin** meanwhile, stood at nearly 350,000 (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 1.8 million items in 2015 (36% of the total).

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

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 2014 and 2015, 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: Historic data

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 [r]	185.46 [r]
2015	79.5	593.7	7.47	25.7 [p]	192.01 [p]

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

[r] Revised using the 2014 mid year estimate of population.

[p] The 2015 figure is provisional as it is based on 2014 mid year estimate of population - see [notes](#).

Table 3: Prescriptions dispensed by BNF Chapter, 2014 and 2015

BNF Chapter Name	Items (thousands)		Cost (£ thousands)		Cost per item (£)		Items per head	
	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014	2015	2014[r]	2015[p]
Gastro-intestinal system	6,997	7,227	32,324	32,083	4.62	4.44	2.3	2.3
Cardiovascular system	23,571	23,535	62,723	65,707	2.66	2.79	7.6	7.6
Respiratory system	5,655	5,737	86,912	87,532	15.37	15.26	1.8	1.9
Central nervous system	15,399	15,886	127,336	131,284	8.27	8.26	5.0	5.1
Infections	3,267	3,113	16,800	17,998	5.14	5.78	1.1	1.0
Endocrine system	7,239	7,439	78,885	86,722	10.90	11.66	2.3	2.4
Obstetrics, gynae & urinary tract disorders	1,850	1,917	22,422	22,909	12.12	11.95	0.6	0.6
Malignant disease & immunosuppression	441	435	17,905	16,768	40.57	38.58	0.1	0.1
Nutrition and blood	3,393	3,498	34,538	36,683	10.18	10.49	1.1	1.1
Musculoskeletal & joint diseases	2,442	2,450	12,761	13,058	5.23	5.33	0.8	0.8
Eye	1,561	1,527	8,950	9,586	5.73	6.28	0.5	0.5
Ear, nose and oropharynx	1,007	1,012	5,981	5,838	5.94	5.77	0.3	0.3
Skin	2,657	2,553	18,529	18,944	6.97	7.42	0.9	0.8
Immunological products & vaccines	802	756	6,411	6,008	7.99	7.95	0.3	0.2
Anaesthesia	79	87	508	960	6.41	10.99	0.0	0.0
Preparations used in diagnosis	0	0	0	0	96.25	17.50	0.0	0.0
Other drugs and preparations	61	64	1,717	1,752	28.37	27.53	0.0	0.0
Dressings	574	536	9,490	8,917	16.55	16.64	0.2	0.2
Appliances	1,192	1,337	13,663	14,531	11.46	10.87	0.4	0.4
Incontinence appliances	128	133	3,452	3,502	26.91	26.26	0.0	0.0
Stoma appliances	225	239	12,134	12,909	53.90	54.12	0.1	0.1
Total	78,539	79,481	573,442	593,690	7.30	7.47	25.4	25.7

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

[r] Revised using the 2014 mid year estimate of population.

[p] The 2015 figure is provisional as it is based on 2014 mid year estimate of population - see [notes](#).

. = not applicable

Table 4: Top 25 prescription items by BNF chemical name - items, 2015

BNF chemical name	Items	NIC(£)
Simvastatin	2,649,201	3,166,891
Omeprazole	2,617,991	4,566,764
Levothyroxine Sodium	2,334,114	7,025,544
Ramipril	2,137,478	3,098,746
Aspirin	2,097,677	1,866,958
Atorvastatin	1,854,456	3,082,853
Amlodipine	1,854,422	1,977,835
Co-Codamol (Codeine Phos/Paracetamol)	1,833,677	9,577,679
Salbutamol	1,759,677	4,380,416
Lansoprazole	1,627,621	2,548,679
Bisoprolol Fumarate	1,536,185	1,938,854
Paracetamol	1,455,773	5,105,411
Metformin Hydrochloride	1,347,336	7,214,965
Citalopram Hydrobromide	1,342,760	1,468,527
Bendroflumethiazide	1,114,187	1,040,212
Furosemide	1,016,692	1,102,290
Warfarin Sodium	992,696	1,918,583
Amitriptyline Hydrochloride	925,646	1,508,917
Ergocalciferol	904,191	2,960,427
Beclometasone Dipropionate	864,173	10,303,346
Lisinopril	782,239	955,338
Amoxicillin	770,763	1,217,666
Sertraline Hydrochloride	761,439	1,432,691
Ibuprofen	706,619	2,405,520
Fluticasone Propionate (Inh)	703,504	30,192,277

Source: NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership

Table 5: Top 25 prescription items by net ingredient cost and BNF chemical name, 2015

BNF chemical name	NIC (£)	Items
Fluticasone Propionate (Inh)	30,192,276.98	703,504
Pregabalin	19,037,794.45	347,954
Budesonide	15,916,013.76	426,594
Tiotropium	14,991,769.94	427,235
Glucose Blood Testing Reagents	10,988,749.41	447,173
Beclometasone Dipropionate	10,303,346.30	864,173
Co-Codamol (Codeine Phos/Paracetamol)	9,577,679.25	1,833,677
Metformin Hydrochloride	7,214,965.32	1,347,336
Levothyroxine Sodium	7,025,544.37	2,334,114
Wound Management & other Dressings	6,767,997.43	354,575
Insulin Glargine	6,410,046.64	122,975
Duloxetine Hydrochloride	5,876,956.57	219,975
Hydrocortisone	5,694,353.46	436,731
Solifenacin	5,562,732.06	196,163
Sitagliptin	5,157,123.52	156,751
Paracetamol	5,105,410.77	1,455,773
Insulin Aspart	5,040,073.11	118,624
Mesalazine (Systemic)	4,813,205.52	89,668
Liraglutide	4,616,984.92	49,361
Omeprazole	4,566,763.93	2,617,991
Salbutamol	4,380,415.89	1,759,677
Aripiprazole	4,232,125.75	65,760
Colostomy Bags	4,189,877.07	21,418
Influenza	4,114,001.69	621,564
Oxycodone Hydrochloride	3,940,383.62	95,684

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 at: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=428>

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 April / 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 2014 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.

Therapeutic Class:

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
- Antiepiletics
- 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

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

Endocrine System	General anaesthesia
Drugs used in diabetes	Local anaesthesia
Thyroid and antithyroid drugs	Preparations used in Diagnosis
Corticosteroids	X-ray contrast media
Sex hormones	Other Drugs and Preparations
Hypothalamic and pituitary hormones and antioestrogens	Dressings
Other endocrine drugs	Appliances
Obstetrics, Gynaecology and Urinary Tract Disorders	Incontinence Supplies
Drugs used in obstetrics	Stoma Appliances
Treatment of vaginal and vulval conditions	
Contraceptives	
Drugs used for genito-urinary disorders	

NOTE: some preparations have multiple indications and may therefore be classified under more than one therapeutic class.

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 which is a change from publications in previous years. 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 2015 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 the attached report from the All Wales Medicines Strategy Group and is illustrated for a basket of cardiovascular medicines (administered once daily). The report is available at:

<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/page.cfm?orgid=371&pid=65590>

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 the Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC)

PCA in England is published by calendar year. The Health & Social Care Information Centre (HSCIC) publishes the data together with a statistical bulletin which provides analysis and comment on patterns and trends; both are available from the HSCIC 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.

A National Statistics publication

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. Designation can be broadly interpreted to mean that the statistics:

- meet identified user needs;
- are well explained and readily accessible;
- are produced according to sound methods, and
- are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Once statistics have been designated as National Statistics it is a statutory requirement that the Code of Practice shall continue to be observed.

Our statistics take into account our disclosure control guidance and follow ONS confidentiality guidelines for Health statistics available from: [ONS best-practice guidelines](#)

National Statistics are produced to high professional standards set out in the National Statistics Code of Practice. They undergo regular quality assurance reviews to ensure that they meet customer needs. They are produced free from any political interference.

Comments:

We welcome comments from users of our publications on content and presentation. If you have any comments or require further information, please contact:

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E-mail: stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk



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National Statistics status

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.