

SDR 50/2011

30 March 2011

## Prescriptions Dispensed in the Community in Wales, 2000 to 2010

This release presents a summary of prescriptions dispensed in the community.

The release highlights the main trends between 2000 when the data on dispensing in the community first became available and 2010 (all data is shown on a calendar year basis).

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.

The Statistical Directorate also publishes a statistical release on prescriptions prescribed by GPs in Wales. Updates to GP prescriptions data are also published on the Prescribing Services website at: <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=428>

### Key Facts

#### In Wales in 2010:

- The number of prescription items dispensed in the community increased from 67.6 million in 2009 to 69.8 million (up by 3.3 per cent).
- The net ingredient cost of all prescriptions dispensed in the community increased by 1.1 per cent since 2009, to £588.8 million.
- The average net ingredient cost per item was £8.43, an 18p decrease from the 2009 figure.
- Drugs for the treatment of the cardiovascular system make up the largest group in terms of prescription items but drugs for the treatment of the central nervous system make up the largest group in terms of cost.

Note: Rates per head of population for 2010 are based on 2009 mid year estimates.

**Statistician:** Gwyneth Thomas

**Tel:** 029 2082 5080

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

**Next update:** March 2012 (provisional)

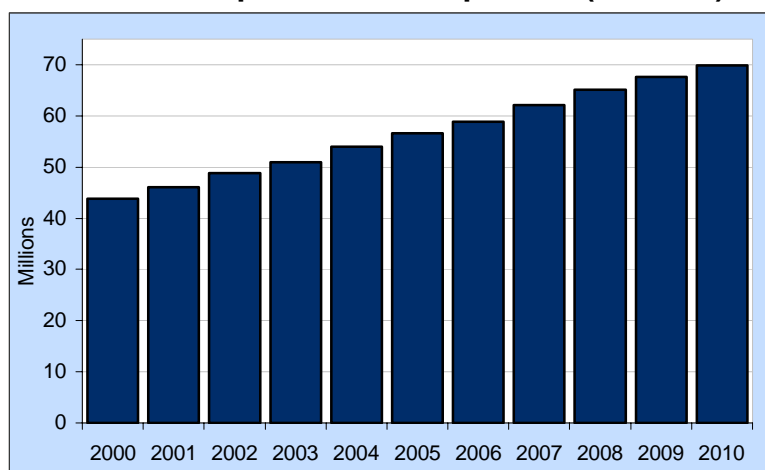
Cyhoeddwyd gan Y Gyfarwyddiaeth Ystadegol  
Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru, Parc Cathays, Caerdydd, CF10 3NQ  
Ffon - Swyddfa'r Wasg **029 2089 8099**, Ymholiadau Cyhoeddus **029 2082 5050**  
[www.cymru.gov.uk/ystadegau](http://www.cymru.gov.uk/ystadegau)

Issued by Statistical Directorate  
Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ  
Telephone - Press Office **029 2089 8099**, Public Enquiries **029 2082 5050**  
[www.wales.gov.uk/statistics](http://www.wales.gov.uk/statistics)



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government

**Chart 1: Prescription items dispensed (millions)**

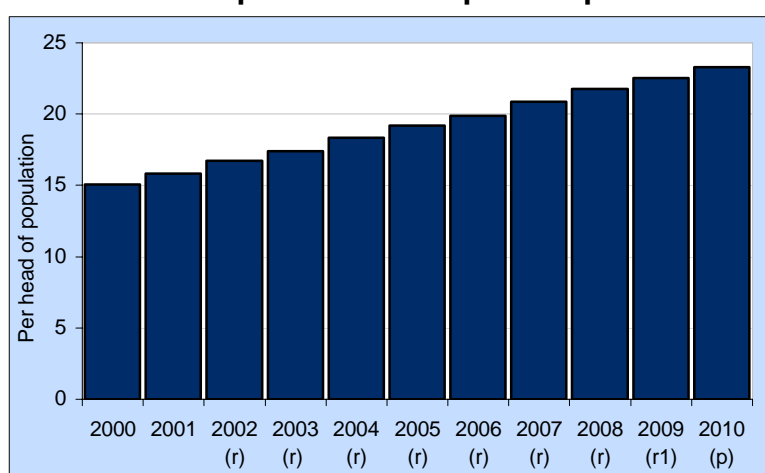


Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

In 2010 the number of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales was 69.8 million, an increase of 3.3 per cent on 2009.

Between 2000 and 2010 the number of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales increased by 59.6 per cent.

**Chart 2: Prescription items dispensed per head of population**



Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

In 2010 the number of prescription items dispensed per head of population was 23.3, an increase of 3.3 per cent on 2009.

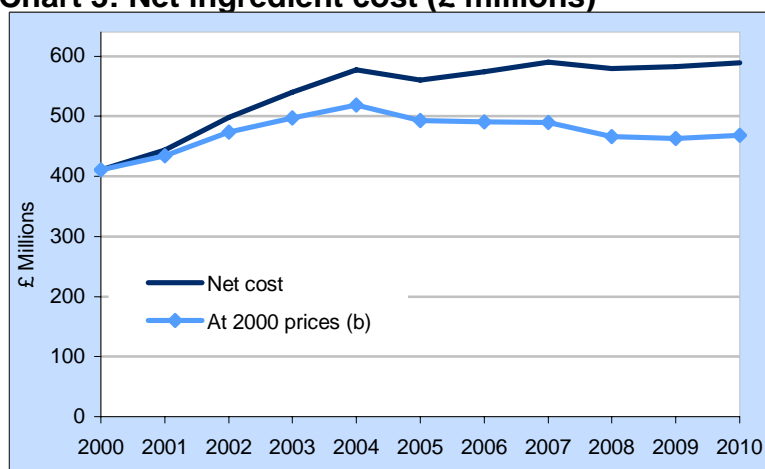
Between 2000 and 2010 the number of prescription items dispensed per head of population increased by 8.2 (54.6 per cent).

(r) The population figures for 2002 to 2008 have been revised. See page 4 for further explanation.

(r1) Revised using 2009 mid year estimate of population.

(p) The 2010 figure is provisional as it is based on 2009 mid year estimate of population.

**Chart 3: Net ingredient cost (£ millions) <sup>(a)</sup>**



Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

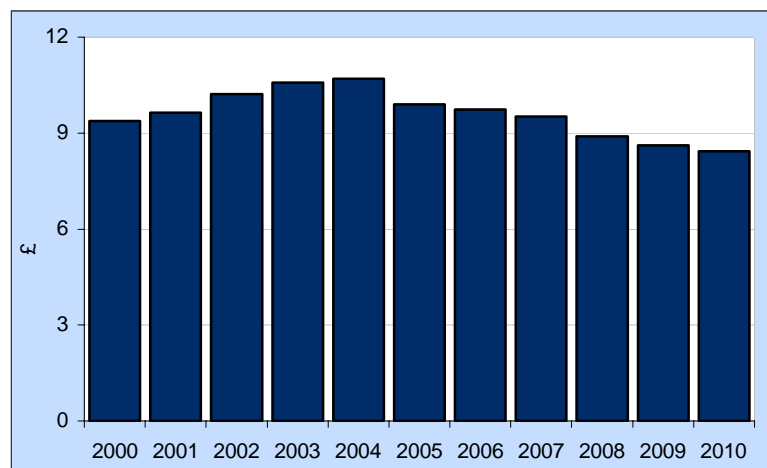
In 2010 the net ingredient cost (NIC) of prescription items dispensed in the community in Wales was £588.8 million, an increase of £6.6 million (1.1 per cent) from 2009.

Between 2000 and 2010 the net ingredient cost £178.4 million (43.5 per cent). At 2000 prices the increase was £58.5 million (14.0 per cent).

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

(b) Using GDP deflator. 2010 deflator not yet available.

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



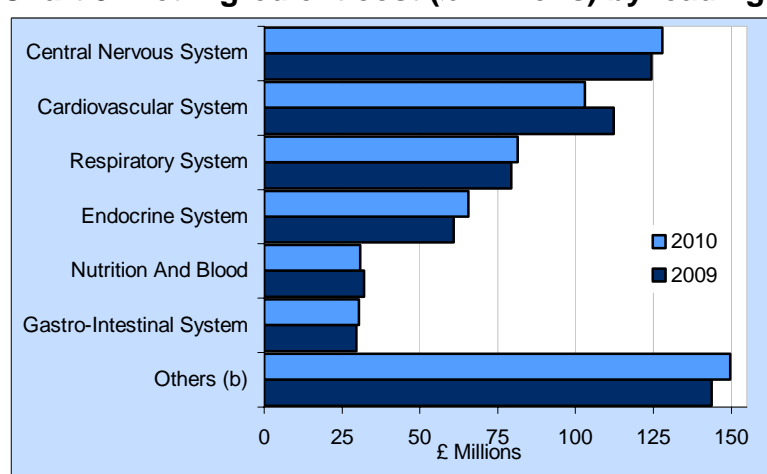
Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

In 2010 the net ingredient cost per prescription item was £8.43, 18 pence less than in 2009 and 95 pence less than in 2000.

This is the sixth consecutive year in which a decrease in the net ingredient cost per prescription item has occurred.

See notes for further explanation of why costs have decreased.

**Chart 5: Net ingredient cost (£ millions) by leading BNF chapters, 2009 and 2010 (a)**



Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

Chart 5 shows the six leading British National Formulary (BNF) chapters in 2010 in terms of net ingredient cost together with the equivalent cost in 2009.

In both years the leading chapter was 'central nervous system'. Prior to this, between 2000 to 2006 inclusive, the highest net ingredient cost was for the 'cardiovascular system'.

The six leading BNF chapters accounted for three quarters (74.6 per cent) of the total net ingredient cost in 2010.

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

(b) See notes for definition of Others.

**Table 1: 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 [r]	170.69 [r]
2003	51.0	539.5	10.58	17.4 [r]	184.20 [r]
2004	54.0	577.0	10.69	18.3 [r]	196.04 [r]
2005	56.6	560.0	9.89	19.2 [r]	189.81 [r]
2006	58.9	574.0	9.74	19.9 [r]	193.78 [r]
2007	62.1	590.3	9.51	20.9 [r]	198.36 [r]
2008	65.1	578.8	8.90	21.8 [r]	193.59 [r]
2009	67.6	582.2	8.61	22.5 [r']	194.10 [r']
2010	69.8	588.8	8.43	23.3 [p]	196.32 [p]

Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

[r] Revised. 2002-2008 mid-year estimates were revised on 13th May 2010 by the Office for National Statistics.

[r'] Revised using the 2009 mid year estimate of population.

[p] The 2010 figure is provisional as it is based on 2009 mid year estimate of population.

**Table 2: Prescriptions dispensed by BNF Chapter 2009 and 2010**

BNF Chapter Name	Items (thousands)		Cost (£ thousands)		Cost per item (£)		Items per head	
	2009	2010	2009	2010	2009	2010	2009 (r)	2010 (p)
Gastro-Intestinal System	5,365.8	5,676.7	29,575.5	30,419.2	5.51	5.36	1.8	1.9
Cardiovascular System	21,691.0	22,037.1	112,305.5	103,072.9	5.18	4.68	7.2	7.3
Respiratory System	4,737.9	4,921.2	79,389.2	81,314.7	16.76	16.52	1.6	1.6
Central Nervous System	12,632.5	13,157.5	124,339.8	127,917.5	9.84	9.72	4.2	4.4
Infections	3,168.9	3,253.9	11,982.2	13,839.2	3.78	4.25	1.1	1.1
Endocrine System	5,752.3	6,110.6	60,787.6	65,562.5	10.57	10.73	1.9	2.0
Obstetrics, Gynae' & Urinary Tract Disorders	1,387.1	1,470.3	19,925.6	21,611.0	14.36	14.70	0.5	0.5
Malignant Disease & Immunosuppression	337.6	347.6	24,639.1	25,324.0	72.98	72.86	0.1	0.1
Nutrition and Blood	2,744.7	2,849.7	32,065.9	30,855.4	11.68	10.83	0.9	1.0
Musculoskeletal & Joint Diseases	2,343.8	2,384.6	12,592.4	12,720.3	5.37	5.33	0.8	0.8
Eye	1,414.0	1,443.2	10,646.7	11,044.2	7.53	7.65	0.5	0.5
Ear, Nose and Oropharynx	870.1	894.1	5,723.9	5,775.4	6.58	6.46	0.3	0.3
Skin	2,560.9	2,623.4	16,594.9	16,911.9	6.48	6.45	0.9	0.9
Immunological Products & Vaccines	768.1	759.1	6,974.1	6,558.3	9.08	8.64	0.3	0.3
Anaesthesia	67.0	69.3	376.5	403.8	5.62	5.83	0.0	0.0
Preparations used in Diagnosis	..	..	..	0.4	..	..	..	0.0
Other Drugs and Preparations	116.7	81.6	2,970.1	2,432.7	25.46	29.80	0.0	0.0
Dressings	688.6	680.6	11,819.2	11,562.4	17.17	16.99	0.2	0.2
Appliances	715.8	796.4	8,281.8	9,118.7	11.57	11.45	0.2	0.3
Incontinence Appliances	90.2	94.5	2,678.4	2,718.9	29.69	28.76	0.0	0.0
Stoma Appliances	154.0	174.4	8,513.5	9,650.9	55.29	55.35	0.1	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>67,607.0</b>	<b>69,825.7</b>	<b>582,181.9</b>	<b>588,814.4</b>	<b>8.61</b>	<b>8.43</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>23.3</b>

Source: NHS Wales Informatics Service (NWIS)

[r] Revised using the 2009 mid year estimate of population.

[p] The 2010 figure is provisional as it is based on 2009 mid year estimate of population.

## Key Quality information

### Source

Prescription Cost Analysis (PCA) data are based on information obtained from prescriptions sent to the Prescribing Services Unit, NHS Wales Informatics Service for payment.

### 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.

### Revisions

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

### Mid year estimates – revisions

2002-2008 mid-year estimates were revised on 13th May 2010 by the Office of National Statistics. These revisions are due to introducing a package of methodological improvements to the migration component of the mid-year estimates

### Data for other UK countries

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

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

Scotland: [http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/information-and-statistics.jsp?pContentID=2241&p\\_applic=CCC&p\\_service=Content.show&](http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/information-and-statistics.jsp?pContentID=2241&p_applic=CCC&p_service=Content.show&)

Northern Ireland: [Prescription Cost Analysis N Ireland](#)

## Notes

### BNF

British National Formulary. The 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.

### PCA in electronic format

The data are provided on the internet, accompanying this Release, in Microsoft Excel files. The prescription items dispensed are listed alphabetically within British National Formulary (BNF) therapeutic class, chapters, sections, sub-paragraphs, chemicals, products and individual preparations. Because of the size of the file data on individual preparations are contained in 3 files sorted alphabetically by chemical name. Please contact Sarah James, Statistical Directorate 5 (029 20825029) to discuss alternative ways of making the data accessible if you are experiencing problems in downloading the spreadsheets.

No exclusions on the basis of numbers of prescription items dispensed have been made. The Excel files therefore include 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.

Further details about PCA data can be obtained from:

Vivien Trew  
Health Statistics and Analysis Unit  
Statistical Directorate  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ  
Telephone: 029 2082 5062  
Email:  
[stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

or

Sandra Hennefer  
Prescribing Services Unit  
NHS Wales Informatics Service  
Brunel House  
Cardiff CF24 0HA  
Telephone: 029 2050 2579  
Email: [sandra.hennefer@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:sandra.hennefer@wales.nhs.uk)

## **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 Assembly 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.

## **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 2009 BNF.

The PPA has created pseudo BNF chapters, which are not published, for items not included in BNF chapters 1 to 15. The majority of such items are dressings and appliances, which the PPA has 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). The PPA has produced a booklet on BNF classifications and the pseudo classifications used.

### **Drug name**

The drug is shown by individual preparation name, which may be proprietary or generic, 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.

### **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 for income obtained where a prescription charge is paid at the time the prescription is dispensed or where the patient has purchased a pre-payment certificate.

### **Quantity (QTY)**

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)

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)

### **Reduction in Net Ingredient Cost**

The decrease, in real terms, of the net ingredient cost since 2004 can be attributed to two things:

Category M

The April 2005 Drug Tariff introduced a new Category M of generic medicines under Part VIII, which applies to some medicines previously in Category A. The basic prices of Category M medicines reflect

the average manufacturers' market prices after discount rather than the Category A system of basket prices before discount.

#### PPRS (PHARMACEUTICAL PRICE REGULATION SCHEME 2005)

Companies with sales of branded prescription medicines to the NHS above £1 million in 2004 were required to reduce prices by 7 per cent from 1 January 2005. Thereafter, there was no price increase before 31st December 2005. The price cut applied to the NHS list price of all products covered by the scheme on the market at 31st December 2004. For companies with NHS home sales of £10 million or less in that year, the first £1 million of sales will be exempt from the price cut. Variable reductions will be allowed provided that the company can show that the aggregate effect is equivalent to an overall reduction of 7 per cent. Scheme members may opt to deliver up to 2 per cent of the price cut by making a payment to the DH. In common with all PPRS receipts, this payment is apportioned between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

There has since been another PPRS scheme introduced in February 2009. This scheme included a 3.9% reduction in the cost of drugs sold to the NHS with another 1.9% cut in January 2010.

#### **Chart 5 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.

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

Vivien Trew  
Health Statistics and Analysis Unit  
Room 2-002  
Welsh Assembly Government  
Cathays Park  
Cardiff, CF10 3NQ  
Telephone: (029) 2082 3134  
Fax: (029) 2082 5350  
E-mail: [stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:stats.healthinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

Further copies of this statistical release are available from the address above.