

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY
BY DEPUTY R.G. LE HÉRISSIER OF ST. SAVIOUR**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 24TH FEBRUARY 2009

Question

“Why are ‘over the counter’ medications such as Aspirin formally prescribed and dispensed and what is the cost to the Department each time a General Practitioner writes such a prescription?”

Answer

One essential purpose of the Health Insurance (Jersey) Law 1967 is to provide financial assistance for all approved medicines prescribed by a General Practitioner or dentist. This is known as the pharmaceutical benefit and it covers the cost of the medicine as well as its supply through a community pharmacist. The cost of approved medicines varies significantly, some cost very little, and others may cost hundreds of pounds. The statutory dispensing fee provided to the pharmacist for supplying approved medicines is currently £2.96, as set by the Health Insurance (Pharmaceutical Benefit) (General Provisions) (No. 2) (Amendment No.6) (Jersey) Order made on 24 September 2008.

Approved medicines are not limited to prescription only medicines. Provided a medicine has a proven therapeutic and efficacious use in the community for treatment or prevention of disease, it may be approved by the Social Security Minister.

Aspirin is an important and effective medicine. It is used for pain relief and it is invaluable in long-term preventative treatments for heart disease and stroke. Given this therapeutic value, aspirin has been an approved medicine under the Health Insurance legislation for some time.

A doctor must ensure medicines are used safely and there are significant risks as well as benefits with aspirin usage. A doctor may, after due consideration of a patient’s medical history, decide it is safer to prescribe a specific aspirin dosage, with specific patient instructions tailored to the individual rather than endorse “over the counter” purchases.