

23.02.28

**9 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding the reported shortages of HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) (OQ.29/2023)**

Will the Minister advise what concerns, if any, she has in relation to the reported shortages of H.R.T. (Hormone Replacement Therapy) medicines and what action is being proposed to ensure that Jersey maintains sufficient supplies?

**Deputy K. Wilson (The Minister for Health and Social Services):**

Yes, there are some concerns shared by myself and other people who are in need of H.R.T. There are some supply issues which are causing shortages. As the Island obtains medicines from the U.K. supply chain, the Island is subject to the same problems faced in the U.K., and this is not a new problem; this has been quite a longstanding issue. What I can tell the Assembly is that it does vary. We have active supply issues with some preparations, including the tablets and the patches; however, the supply of gels and sprays does appear to be sufficient at present but of course it is a matter that we will keep under review. What I would urge members of the public to do is to note that there are sufficient alternatives and equivalent preparations available and, as such, it is important that patients do discuss any concerns about their H.R.T. therapy with their G.P. (general practitioner) who will be able to prescribe an alternative, if appropriate.

**3.9.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:**

I thank the Minister for her answer. Can I ask whether there are any contingency plans perhaps - and I hate to use the words - but rationing or limiting or planning out access so that there is equity of access for women across the Island on drugs that are quite important to maintain standards in life, really?

**Deputy K. Wilson:**

As the Deputy will know, the production of medicines is complex and highly regulated and H.R.T. in particular relies on a global supply chain, so these problems can arise in the supply for various reasons. But what we will do is always keep the situation under review to ensure the continuity because I think that is the issue that the Deputy is raising. We are following some of the legislation that was established in the U.K., which was to enable the introduction of what is called "serious shortage protocol". What this means is that pharmacists can use their professional skill and judgment to decide alongside medical experts whether it is reasonable and appropriate to substitute the patient's prescribed medication within this active protocol. Clearly the patients must also agree. But of course in Jersey the legislation does not provide for this and if there is a need to change the legislation, this is something that we would consider in this context. At the moment we are keeping the situation under review and we will make sure that we do enough communication and work with the general public to make sure that they talk to their G.P. directly about the supply and the issues.