

## Cost effective lancet choices for self use by patients

Patients needing to self monitor blood glucose (where appropriate) will also need to be prescribed lancets to use with a finger pricking device to enable them to draw blood samples to test.

The national spend on lancets is £13.2 million annually (ePACT January 2015 to March 2015), this PrescQIPP bulletin provides guidance for reviewing and switching patients on to a more cost-effective lancet compatible with their lancing device.

### Recommendations

- Use the least costly lancets that are suitable for the individual patient - these may not be the one provided with the meter. There are a number of cost effective lancets available on prescription priced at less than £3 per 100 lancets.
- Lancets are designed to fit into proprietary finger-pricking devices however, most single use lancets can fit several devices. Once CCGs have made their formulary choices they may wish to contact lancet manufacturers for a supply of lancing devices to give their patients.
- Finger pricking devices are not prescribable on an FP10 as they are not listed as appliances under Part IXA of the Drug Tariff.<sup>1</sup> Finger pricking devices are supplied with the blood glucose monitoring meter. Patients who have special visual or psychological needs should be provided with injection devices or needle-free systems that they can use independently for accurate dosing.
- Multi-device lancets which contain a preloaded lancet drum, should be restricted to those with clinical need, e.g. those with dexterity problems or children where disposal of sharps may be impractical or difficult.
- Safety lancets are designed so that the sharp retracts after use. These are primarily for the benefit of healthcare workers to avoid needle stick injury, not to be used by patients self-monitoring blood glucose, therefore they should not routinely be prescribed by GPs on FP10s.
- Ensure that quantities on prescription are appropriate and in line with frequency of testing (i.e. should match quantities and frequency of ordering of blood glucose test strips).
- Lancets are for single use only, patients should be provided with suitable containers for the collection of used lancets. Arrangements should be available for the suitable disposal of these containers.
- Lancets for self use must not be used by healthcare workers to take samples from more than one patient.<sup>2</sup>

### Supporting information

Lancets are devices used to prick a patient's finger to withdraw a small amount of blood, in order to test blood glucose levels. Lancets are available in different sizes; the higher the gauge, the smaller the diameter of the needle. A higher gauge lancet is generally less painful but may not provide sufficient blood for testing.

The PrescQIPP blood glucose monitoring bulletin covers when it is appropriate for patients to self-monitor blood glucose and also cost effective strips. Available at <http://www.prescqipp.info/blood-glucose-testing-strips/viewcategory/200> )

## Safety devices

Under the Health and Safety Executive Regulations 2013<sup>3</sup> employers must substitute traditional, unprotected medical sharps with a 'safer sharp' where it is reasonably practicable to do so. What this means in practice is that healthcare workers who are required to administer insulin (e.g. District Nurses) to patients especially outside of the clinical setting with no direct access to sharps bins must use 'safer sharps'. Safer sharps are not required for use by patients who self-administer insulin/ self monitor blood glucose.

The MHRA published a Drug Safety Alert in 2009 warning of cross contamination of blood when single use lancets intended for self care are used in clinics by healthcare professionals to take blood samples from more than one patient. Healthcare professionals should use appropriate devices intended for use in healthcare settings for this purpose.<sup>2</sup>

## Costs and savings available

Chart 1 shows the costs of the lancets currently available<sup>1,4</sup>

There is a significant difference in costs of lancets. Safety devices are significantly more expensive and should not be prescribed for patients self-monitoring blood glucose. They have been highlighted in red on chart 1.

For newly diagnosed patients with diabetes or patients newly initiated on self-monitoring of blood glucose, if appropriate, use cost effective blood glucose test strips (BGTS) in combination with cost effective choice of lancets when first initiating a prescription.

For existing patients using lancets, consider switching to a more cost effective lancet costing less than £3 per 100 lancets ensuring the lancets are compatible with the finger pricking device the patient has or the patient is able to obtain a compatible finger pricking device (even if meter/BGTS cannot be changed).

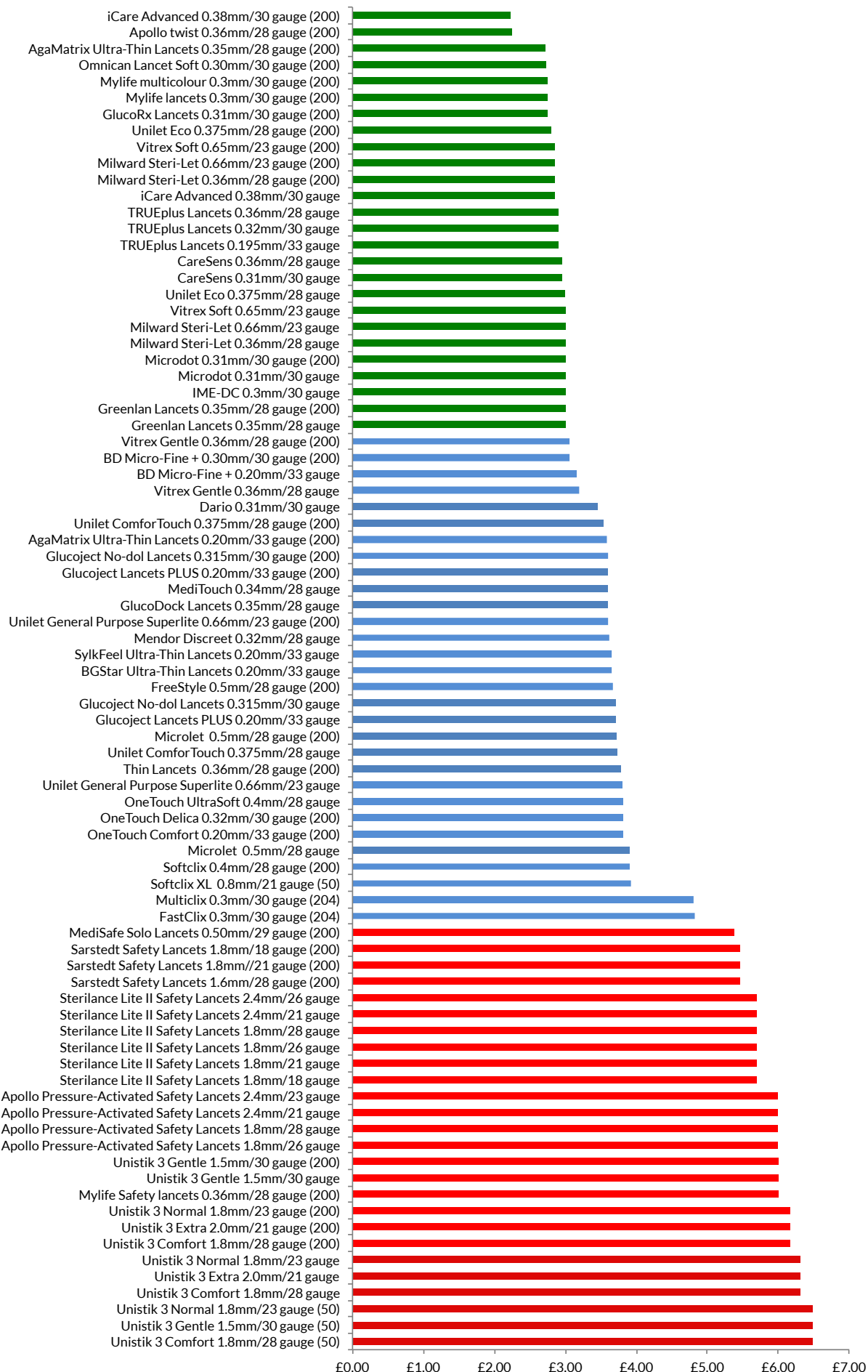
Review patients on multi-device lancets and if there is no specific need for this type of lancet, consider switching.

The national spend on lancets is £13.2 million annually, switching to lancets that cost less than £3 for 100 lancets could **save approximately £3.6 million annually across England. This equates to £6,313 per 100,000 patients** (ePACT January 2015 - March 2015). Any changes in device should be tailored to the individual needs of the patient.

Chart 1. Diabetes lancets - Cost per 100 lancets (packs of 100 unless indicated in brackets)

Green = lancets costing less than £3/100

Red = safety lancets



## Summary

- Cost differences exist between the lancets and there are significant savings to be made by switching appropriate patients, however choice should be based on the most cost-effective and suitable option for the patient.
- Patients should be provided with suitable containers for the collection of used sharps. Arrangements should be available for the suitable disposal of these containers.

## References

1. NHS Business Services Authority. NHS Electronic Drug Tariff. May 2015 available at <http://www.drugtariff.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/#/00160570-FA/FA00160127> accessed 29/04/15
2. MHRA. Lancing Devices for Blood Glucose Monitoring. Drug Safety Update. June 2009. Available at <http://www.mhra.gov.uk/Safetyinformation/DrugSafetyUpdate/CON088111>
3. Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013; Guidance for employers and employees. Published by the Health and Safety Executive <http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsis7.htm>
4. MIMS online. April 2015 available at [www.mims.co.uk](http://www.mims.co.uk) accessed 29/04/15

## Additional PrescQIPP resources



Data pack

Available here: <http://www.prescqipp.info/resources/viewcategory/271-bulletin-data-packs>

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This document represents the view of PrescQIPP at the time of publication, which was arrived at after careful consideration of the referenced evidence, and in accordance with PrescQIPP's quality assurance framework.

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