Supplementary medicines information for palliative care patients

All medicines are supplied with a manufacturer’s ‘Patient Information Leaflet’. This can provide a great deal of information about the medicine, its normal uses and side effects. However, most medicines have more than one effect on the body and for many years, palliative care (hospice) doctors have found that certain medicines are safe and effective for the treatment of symptoms other than those specified by the medicine’s manufacturer and there is now plenty of experience to confirm such use.

We are providing you with this extra information to inform you of the reason(s) why you are taking this medicine and to highlight any other information. This should be read in conjunction with the attached manufacturer’s patient information leaflet.

**Pilocarpine eye drops 4% to be taken by mouth**

In palliative care, pilocarpine eye drops are sometimes prescribed to be taken by mouth to treat dry mouth conditions.

**Frequently asked questions**

**Q. What form(s) of this medicine are there and how is it usually taken?**
- Pilocarpine is available as 4% eye drops. You will usually be prescribed one to four drops to be put on your tongue three times a day with meals.
- The drops may be diluted in a little water before taking. Ignore the printing on the box and container referring to use as eye drops.

NB Always follow the dose indicated on the label or advised by a healthcare professional.

**Q. What are the most likely side effects?**
- Pilocarpine may sometimes cause sweating, dizziness, diarrhoea, sickness, blurred vision, headache, stomach cramps and problems with increased frequency of passing urine.
- It may also cause excessive production of saliva (spit) or chest secretions and a tight, wheezy chest.

**Q. What are the main special instructions and precautions when taking this medicine?**
- This medicine should not be used by those with poorly controlled asthma or obstructive pulmonary disease (often referred to by your doctor as ‘COPD’) or narrow angle glaucoma.

Further information
If you have any questions about any of the medicines you have been prescribed or have any problems with side effects, please speak to one of the following:

St Catherine’s Hospice
Telephone: 01293 447333

St Catherine’s Hospice Pharmacist
Telephone: 01293 535000