

GP wants Scottish Government to modernise prescription handling

Chair of the BMA's Scottish GP Committee Andrew Buist believes doctors are wasting valuable time physically signing prescriptions which could be done electronically.

The Perthshire GP has called on The Scottish Government to modernise the way prescriptions are handled.

This week – after signing 220 prescriptions in one day – he called on The Scottish Government to take action.

With three GPs on leave, two off sick and just Dr Buist and one other GP left to care for 7,800 patients, he argued his time could have been better spent than signing so many prescriptions.

Tweeting a picture of the prescriptions piled on his desk he said: “Scottish Gov must deliver on promised electronic solution to this – the funding must be provided.”

A new record – 220 prescription signatures today – 3 GPs on leave, 2 off sick so 2 GPs looking after 7800 patients. We have better things to do. Scottish Gov must deliver on promised electronic solution to this – the funding must be

provided pic.twitter.com/UgZoVWPNF6

– Andrew Buist (@AndrewBuist17) [July 11, 2023](#)

The Blairgowrie GP later told the Local Democracy Reporting Service: “We need to modernise the way we deal with prescriptions – particularly repeat prescriptions. I recently had to sign 220 prescriptions in one day, which is not a good use of my time when there are patients who need to see me. It’s also inconvenient and slow for patients.

“With the current backlog in secondary care, more patients are returning to their GPs, this valuable time could be spent with them instead of being taken up by this. Signing by hand numerous individual prescriptions should be a thing of the past, having an efficient IT system in place to reduce the number of repeat prescriptions that need to be physically signed would reduce unnecessary workload. The Scottish Government must commit the promised funding of the programme to improve this.”

Responding to the points raised in Dr Buist’s Tweet, the Scottish Government said it was working towards a paperless system.

A Scottish Government spokesperson said: “We are working with National Services Scotland and the National Digital Service to fully digitalise the prescribing and dispensing routes for medicines through the Digital Prescribing and Dispensing Pathways Programme. This will support a paperless system, utilising advanced electronic signatures, across primary care, including between GP practices and pharmacies.

“Electronic Transmission of Prescriptions (ETP) has been operating in Scotland since 2006 alongside paper prescriptions which are a legal requirement until advanced electronic signatures are established.”

As part of the current ETP system, GPs can use serial prescribing which allows them to issue a prescription for up to 56 weeks, which is then dispensed at specified intervals in the community pharmacy. This runs in parallel with paper prescriptions. The Chronic Medicines Register is part of the ETP system.

When someone on Twitter pointed out you could register with a pharmacy to be on a Chronic Medicines Register Dr Buist responded: "I find CMS clunky and inflexible- medications change regularly – you don't know what you'll need in a year – we need a better real time paperless solution now."

by Kathryn Anderson Local Democracy Reporter

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