

Travelling abroad with medication

“The everyday medicines that could land you in prison if you take them on holiday” (The Mirror, 14 November 2017)

Laura Plummer, a British tourist, is currently in an Egyptian prison following her arrest for carrying tramadol into Egypt without a permit. This case has recently caused controversy in the mainstream media.

All medication

It is the patient’s responsibility to establish the rules for their destination, airline and any country they are travelling through. These may all be different!

They need to remember prescribed AND over-the-counter medications. *(In some areas, common over-the-counter medications such as nasal decongestant inhalers (VICKS to you and I) and cough linctus are banned.)*

Patients should do this well in advance:

- Local regulations (e.g. in Turkey, China and Singapore) may require them to get a licence for carriage of ANY personal medication.
- They may need a doctor’s letter *and to get this translated by an authorised body* for any medication to be carried.

Controlled drugs

Even travelling within Europe may require some care if your patient is using controlled drugs:

- Government advice is that a patient must be able to prove controlled medication belongs to them to travel into or out of the UK.
- This requires a letter outlining use and countersigned by ‘the person who prescribed the drugs’.
- If carrying more than 3 months’ supply, they will also need a Home Office licence:
<https://www.gov.uk/travelling-controlled-drugs>

While a letter may be required for travel, this is not an NHS service. Primary care can charge patients for the time taken to write the letter, or can decline to provide a letter and direct patients to private travel clinics for this service.

Requests for extra supplies of medication for patients who wish to travel abroad

If a patient is going to be abroad for more than 3 months, all that he or she is entitled to at NHS expense is a sufficient supply of his/her regular medication to get to the destination and find an alternative supply of that medication abroad.

GPs are not responsible for the prescribing of ‘just in case’ items for conditions which may arise while abroad or traveling.