

Children to have access to epilepsy drug in Wales

Epilepsy is a disorder characterised by seizures which are due to abnormal electrical activity in the brain. Seizures can vary from the briefest lapses of attention or muscle jerks, to severe and prolonged convulsions such as violent and involuntary muscle contractions. Seizures can also vary in frequency, from less than one per year to several per day.

Children aged between 4 and 15 who have this condition will have access to lacosamide (Vimpat®) as adjunctive therapy in the treatment of partial-onset seizures, even if the partial seizure spreads across the brain.

In Wales, paediatric epilepsy is the most common neurological disorder, affecting about 0.7% of all children. Around 10-29 per cent of paediatric epilepsy patients find that currently available anti-epileptic drugs do not control their seizures sufficiently, highlighting the need for new treatment options.

A New Treatment Fund for Wales was announced by the Health Secretary, Vaughan Gething last year, making £80m available to speed up access to the very latest medicines recommended by the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and AMWSG.

Under the new system, all health boards in Wales are required to make a NICE or AMWSG recommended medicine available no later than two months from the date the guidance is published, shortening the maximum amount of time before which a health board must make a treatment available by a third.

Health Secretary Vaughan Gething said:

“This is a great example of the New Treatment Fund working for epilepsy patients and their families in Wales. This can be a debilitating and distressing condition.

“The substantial investment that we have made in NHS Wales demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that patients receive the latest recommended treatments quickly, no matter where they live in Wales.

“I look forward to seeing the fund continuing to promptly deliver the latest, innovative medicines to patients who need them, making a real difference to their lives.”