

New bill gives hospitals power to develop personalised treatment

NHS hospitals will be able to use innovative, personalised medicines for unique cancers and diseases, following the introduction of the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill today (Thursday 13 February).

The bill will also:

- increase the range of professions able to prescribe medicines in low-risk circumstances, reducing unnecessary GP appointments
- introduce new regulations on medical devices, such as pacemakers, breast implants and ultrasound imagers, to ensure patient safety

The new bill means hospitals can use patient tissue and DNA samples to tailor treatments to individual patients when other medicines have failed, or to develop drugs that have a shelf-life of minutes and would otherwise be unavailable to them. This has the potential to streamline access to treatments for patients with rare cancers and brain tumours.

The bill also allows the sector to increase the range of professions able to prescribe medicines in low-risk circumstances, as midwives and paramedics do now with pain relief and physiotherapists with anti-inflammatories. This means the NHS can make the best use of its highly skilled workforce, saving patients' time and reducing unnecessary GP appointments.

There will be safeguards and limits on what medications are eligible. The government will work with the NHS and stakeholders to determine what medicines could be eligible and in what circumstances.

The bill will also allow the government to ensure medical devices are subject to the highest standards of regulation, further boosting patient safety and ensuring the UK leads the way in developing pioneering health technology. With a faster, more flexible system in place, regulators will be able to respond to changes in technology or patient safety concerns as soon as possible.

Companies will need to register medical devices with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), ensuring suppliers follow strict safety checks and enabling tough enforcement action if something goes wrong.

The Health and Social Care Secretary will be given the power to disclose specific information about devices to members of the public and the healthcare system, subject to appropriate safeguards, when there are serious patient safety concerns.

Health Minister Baroness Blackwood said:

I am determined to help everyone who uses our world-leading NHS to access pioneering, cutting-edge treatments as soon as possible.

The new bill will give our most treasured institution further freedom to innovate to improve the lives of countless people and protect patient safety to the highest standards.

It will slash red tape, support uptake of treatments for people with rare diseases and empower those in the NHS who know what's best for their patients to deliver the best quality care.