



Protecting and improving the nation's health

**To:**

Health and Justice Leads PHE  
NHS England Commissioners  
Prison Healthcare and Substance misuse Providers  
National Offender Monitoring Service(NOMS)

**From:**

Denise Farmer: NHS England  
[denisefarmer@nhs.net](mailto:denisefarmer@nhs.net)  
Dr George Ryan: Public Health England  
[George.Ryan@phe.gov.uk](mailto:George.Ryan@phe.gov.uk)

25 June 2015

NHS England Gateway Number: 03566  
PHE Gateway Number: 2015137

Dear Colleague,

**Re: Misuse of hyoscine butylbromide (Buscopan)**

The aim of this letter is to raise awareness of the misuse of hyoscine butylbromide (Buscopan) that has been reported from HM prisons. Buscopan is an anticholinergic licensed for the relief of spasm of the genito-urinary tract or gastro-intestinal tract and for the symptomatic relief of Irritable Bowel Syndrome<sup>1</sup>.

Recent reports to NHS England and Public Health England describe prisoners crushing and smoking Buscopan. This releases scopolamine that is a known hallucinogen<sup>2</sup>. Reported effects of this misuse in the literature<sup>3</sup> include hallucinations (auditory, visual and tactile), amnesia, insomnia, palpitations, flushing, irritability, and inability to concentrate.

We recommend that in the light of these reports that clinicians and medicines management committees consider the following to minimise the risk of misuse:

- Review formularies to replace hyoscine butylbromide with an alternative. Please note that mebeverine, a commonly used alternative, gives a positive result to amphetamine in urine tests<sup>4</sup>
- Review people prescribed hyoscine butylbromide and consider prescribing an alternative where treatment is still indicated
- Consider reducing the in-possession status of this medicine to weekly or not in-possession.

---

<sup>1</sup> Buscopan 10mg Tablets SPC: <http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/medicine/30089>

<sup>2</sup> J of toxicology <http://jat.oxfordjournals.org/content/31/4/220.full.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Smoking crushed hyoscine/scopolamine tablets as drug abuse, Subst Use Misuse. 2014 Jun;49(7):793-7  
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24494624>

<sup>4</sup> Concateno Non-instrumental Cross-reactivity Manual 2009

- For people receiving hyoscine butylbromide in-possession consider including this medicine as part of adherence checking procedures used for other high risk medicines.
- Share this information with prison staff (including security and drug strategy teams) and encourage reporting and sharing of incidents of possible misuse between prison and healthcare teams.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Farmer', with a horizontal line underneath.

Denise Farmer  
Pharmaceutical Adviser Health and Justice Commissioning  
NHS England

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Ryan', with a horizontal line underneath.

George Ryan  
Criminal Justice Clinical and Commissioning Lead  
Public Health England