

Prescribing...

Top tip

Question: What is the difference between "XL" and "tab"?

Answer:

- XL is extra large and tab is short for tablet.
- Oh no, please, please let this not be yet another cunning plan.
- Who cares ? I'm too busy.
- About £200,000.

The correct answer is of course d ! This is the sum that would have been available to us all via the Health fund if all **modified release i.e. XL Venlafaxine preparations** had been prescribed as **immediate release generic Venlafaxine tablets** in the last twelve months.

The patent on venlafaxine tablets expired in 2009 and since then the price has fallen considerably. For example fifty six Venlafaxine 75 mg tablets now cost just **£4.02** when prescribed generically. In contrast the modified release preparation remains on patent and will do for some time to come. Twenty eight Venlafaxine **MR 150 mg** capsules cost **£36.81**, or **800% plus more** than the generic tablets.

Prescribing figures indicate that just over **540** patients on the islands were dispensed modified release Venlafaxine in the past year. Taking one capsule daily as opposed to one tablet twice daily may well have been a little more convenient for these individual patients. However it is debatable whether or not the £200,000 premium this costs is wise use of public funds.

If a modified release Venlafaxine preparation is truly unavoidable please prescribe mr tablets which are taken once daily, are available generically and are a little better value. For all new patients please use generic venlafaxine tablets. Doctors in practices with Scriptswitch already receive messages to this effect.

Many thanks as always.

Please contact me if you would like any more information.
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