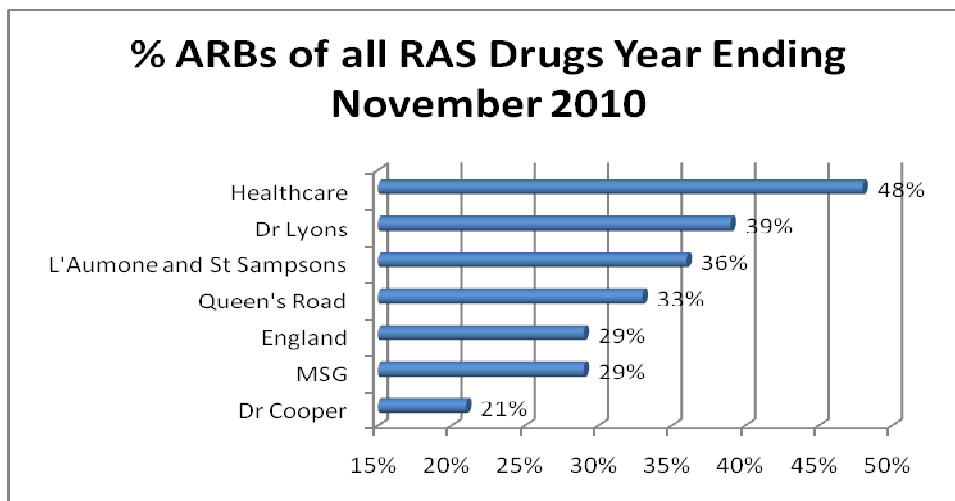


## Renin Angiotensin Drugs

- All NICE guidelines recommend angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitors, or ACEIs, first-line when a renin angiotensin system, RAS, drug is indicated.
- Angiotensin receptor blockers, or ARBs, are an alternative option when ACEIs are strongly indicated but are not tolerated due to severe intractable cough.
- ARBs are much more expensive than ACEIs, but now losartan has become available generically and represents much better value than other ARBs.
- This bulletin looks at looks at the latest local prescribing data on RAS drugs.

In the twelve months to November 2010 **97,092** prescriptions were dispensed on the islands for all renin angiotensin drugs at a total cost of **£660, 263**. Of these prescriptions **38,492** were for **ARBs** at a cost of **£537,063**.

The percentage ARBs of total RAS drugs is used as a marker of evidence based, cost effective prescribing in the UK. Figures for the individual local practices and for England are as follows.



There is also significant inter-practice variability in overall prescribing and hence cost of these drugs.

- Of the two practices in Alderney, one has the lowest rate of ARB prescribing in all of the Bailiwick and the other the second highest.
- In the Guernsey practices Healthcare prescribes nearly as many ARBs as the other two practices combined. In the year to November 2010 Queen's Road and L'Aumone each issued just over 9,000 prescriptions and Healthcare nearly 18,000.
- This resulted in the cost of ARB prescribing by Healthcare being over **£100,000** per annum more than the other two large practices in Guernsey, as shown overleaf.

### Cost of ARB Prescribing in £ by Practice Year Ending November 2010



**There is no evidence that on a population basis any one ARB is more effective or safer than another.** Differences in licensed indications mean that a drug has not been tested for this indication and not that it is ineffective or less effective than alternatives. Of all ARBs losartan is now by far the best value. Twenty eight 50mg tablets now cost just £2.38. Valsartan 80mg capsules cost £13.97 for 28 and other ARBs are similarly priced.

**For reasons of safety, efficacy and cost ACEIs should remain first line first choice for our patients.**

However, when the use of an ARB is truly unavoidable, please make losartan first line for all new patients. Its licensed indications are as follows

- **Hypertension,**
- **Reduction of stroke risk in hypertension with left ventricular hypertrophy,**
- **Chronic heart failure where ACE inhibitors are unsuitable or are contra-indicated and**
- **Diabetic nephropathy in type 2 diabetes mellitus.**

For patients with one of the above conditions, particularly hypertension, and already on another ARB please consider a switch to losartan at the next review. When converting patients with hypertension the attached table may be used.

Many PCOs in England are now switching patients on more expensive ARBs to losartan. Practices with Scriptswitch already have a message to this effect. If for any reason losartan is not tolerated or is ineffective than the other ARBs remain available to be tried.

**Please contact me if you would like any more information.**

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**Ref : Epact.net, Drug Tariff January 2011, National Prescribing Centre, BNF number 60.**