

HOUSE OF COMMONS DEFENCE COMMITTEE REPORT – ‘AN ACCEPTABLE RISK? THE USE OF LARIAM FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL’

SECOND SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT

1. This memorandum provides a second six-month update on the MOD's progress in implementing the recommendations of the House of Commons Defence Committee report 'An acceptable risk? The use of Lariam for military personnel' (HC 567) which was published in May 2016.
2. The Committee published the Government response to the report in September 2016 (HC 648) and requested six-monthly updates on the MOD's progress in implementing the recommendations of the report. The first six-monthly report was published by the Committee on 11 October 2017.
3. The first six-monthly update detailed the revisions made to the MOD's Malaria Prevention Policy. A copy of the policy was published on gov.uk on 7 June 2017, with links to it on the mefloquine information signposting page.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650918/2017_0601-JSP_950_Lft_3-3-1_Prev_Mal_Mil_Pers_V2_01_Jun17_Endorsed-O.pdf
4. In November, the Government published an official statistic¹ which showed that the number of mefloquine prescriptions remains very low, with only 40 personnel having been prescribed mefloquine between 1 April 2017 and 30 September 2017. This constitutes only 0.6% of all anti-malarial drugs prescribed to Service personnel in this period. This was a further reduction from the number of prescriptions reported in the previous mefloquine official statistic which covered the period 12 September 2016 to 31 March 2017.
5. Of those prescribed mefloquine, 32 out of 40 (80%) had a coded electronic entry for a face-to-face risk assessment in their patient record. The official statistic is based on the codes generated when a clinician utilises the electronic templates to record that a face-to-face consultation has taken place. It is possible that risk assessments were done, and alternatives to mefloquine offered, and recorded as free text in the medical records instead of coded data. It is therefore not necessarily the case that risk assessments were not

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mefloquine-lariam-prescribing-in-the-uk-armed-forces-12-september-2016-to-30-september-2017>

undertaken in eight out of 40 (20%) of cases: hence, the 80% figure is a minimum. The completion of templates is still an evolving process and Defence Primary Healthcare continues to carefully monitor prescriptions of mefloquine and request that clinicians provide assurance that prescriptions are given according to policy.

6. The mefloquine Single Point of Contact (SPOC) email and telephone line, established in September 2016 for both current and former Service personnel who have concerns about their experience of mefloquine, recorded 97 enquiries in the first year, 56 of which were received in the first month. In the six month period covered by this update, eight enquires have been received.
7. We have conducted research into the side effects of malaria chemo-prophylaxis, in accordance with the MOD Research Ethics Committee approved research proposal: data will be collected from military personnel returning from exercise in Kenya in December 2017.
8. The malaria prevention strategies (physical bite avoidance and chemo-prophylaxis) the MOD has put in place for our personnel continue to prove successful, most recently with regard to personnel deployed to South Sudan as part of the UN Mission; and the MOD's policies and procedures for the use of anti-malarials are kept under constant review.
9. Mefloquine continues to be recommended as a safe and effective form of malaria prevention by Public Health England, the World Health Organisation and other respected bodies who take account of the body of global evidence.
10. The MOD has positively addressed the concerns expressed by the Committee. Following the Committee's report we have revised our malaria protection policy; introduced a new method for recording compliance with risk assessment requirements; established a Single Point of Contact which handled the initial peak of inquiries following publication of the Committee's report, supported by a mefloquine signposting page; and are committed to further research. Mefloquine prescription across the Armed Forces is now minimal.
11. We will, of course, continue to do all that we can to address any concerns raised by individuals who may have taken mefloquine.

