



**Re: Preferred Product - Glatiramer acetate**

29 January 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to inform you that the HSE-Medicines Management Programme (MMP) has completed a review of the medicinal products containing glatiramer acetate that are available on the High Tech Arrangement, and is now recommending a preferred product.

Expenditure on medicinal products containing glatiramer acetate under the High Tech Arrangement was approximately €7.5 million in 2019. Hybrid medicinal products containing glatiramer acetate are now available; the MMP recognises the potential savings arising from this. These savings, however, can only be realised by increased utilisation of the preferred product identified by the MMP.

The MMP recommends **Brabio**<sup>®</sup> as the preferred product for glatiramer acetate on the High Tech Arrangement. An evaluation report entitled **Preferred Product: Glatiramer Acetate on the High Tech Arrangement** is available at [www.hse.ie/yourmedicines](http://www.hse.ie/yourmedicines) in the section entitled *Evaluation Reports*.

Implementation of this recommendation will lead to significant savings for the health service, in the order of millions of euros. At this point in time, in order to ensure that the potential savings arising from this recommendation are fully realised, additional measures are being put in place for adult patients who are initiated on glatiramer acetate.

**Accordingly, from 1 February 2021, reimbursement of glatiramer acetate under the High Tech Arrangement will only be supported for the identified preferred product (i.e. Brabio<sup>®</sup>) in adult patients commencing such therapy.** When issuing a repeat prescription for a medicinal product containing glatiramer acetate, the patient should be considered for switching to Brabio<sup>®</sup>.

In recognition of the efficiencies that result from the prescribing of the MMP preferred product Brabio<sup>®</sup>, a gain share arrangement is being made available to consultant-led teams to fund service delivery or enhancement for patients. Accordingly, a once-off sum of €500 will be made available to consultant-led teams who either initiate patients on, or switch them to the MMP preferred product Brabio<sup>®</sup>, with the prescription being generated on the High Tech Hub. The process and governance of the distribution of this gain share will be detailed in a subsequent communication from the HSE-Primary Care Reimbursement Service.

Please find enclosed frequently asked questions for healthcare professionals, and information for patients. Further information on this initiative including information for healthcare professionals, and resources to support initiating patients on, or switching them to the identified preferred product are available on the MMP website ([www.hse.ie/yourmedicines](http://www.hse.ie/yourmedicines)) in the section entitled *Best-value medicines*.

MMP pharmacists are available to engage with consultants and clinical teams to provide support for initiation of, and switching to the identified preferred product. Please contact the MMP ([mmp@hse.ie](mailto:mmp@hse.ie)) if you wish to avail of this support.

My thanks for your ongoing support in promoting safe, effective and cost-effective prescribing.

With best wishes,



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Professor Michael Barry,  
**National Clinical Lead,**  
**Medicines Management Programme.**  
[www.hse.ie/yourmedicines](http://www.hse.ie/yourmedicines)



## **Reimbursement of Medicinal Products containing Glatiramer Acetate: Questions and Answers for Healthcare Professionals February 2021**

### **Introduction**

In October 2020, following a review of medicinal products containing glatiramer acetate, the HSE-Medicines Management Programme (MMP) identified a preferred product for glatiramer acetate on the High Tech Arrangement; Brabio®.

The MMP recommends that when initiating a patient on a medicinal product containing glatiramer acetate, the clinician should prescribe Brabio®. The MMP also recommends that prescribers should give consideration to switching a patient to Brabio® when a repeat prescription is being issued for a medicinal product containing glatiramer acetate.

An evaluation report, which includes information on the process followed to identify the preferred product, is available on the website of the MMP under *Evaluation Reports*:  
<https://www.hse.ie/yourmedicines>

### **What changes are being introduced for glatiramer acetate from 1 February 2021?**

From 1 February 2021, it is HSE policy that all adult patients who are commencing treatment with glatiramer acetate should be prescribed the MMP preferred product Brabio®.

### **Why have these changes been introduced?**

The preferred product is provided to the HSE at a much lower cost than the original version of glatiramer acetate. This provides an opportunity to reduce the cost to the HSE of providing this medicine to patients. Prescribing of the preferred product will lead to significant savings for the health service, which can assist in facilitating access to new, innovative medicines for patients.

## What do these changes mean for new patients i.e. those commencing treatment with glatiramer acetate?

From **1 February 2021**, all adult patients who are commencing treatment with glatiramer acetate should be prescribed Brabio®.

### What is the definition of a new patient?

A new patient, is an adult, who has never been prescribed glatiramer acetate before, or has not received this medicine within the last six months.

## What do these changes mean for existing patients prescribed glatiramer acetate prior to 1 February 2021?

There is currently no change for existing patients. They will continue to receive their medicine under the High Tech Arrangement from their community pharmacy.

However, when existing patients present for a repeat prescription for a medicinal product containing glatiramer acetate, **the prescriber could consider switching the patient to Brabio®.**

## Do these changes apply to all patients?

These changes **do not apply to paediatric patients** i.e. patients who are less than 18 years of age.

## Where can I get information on the preferred product for glatiramer acetate?

Information on the preferred product is available on the website of the MMP under *Best-value medicines*:

<https://www.hse.ie/yourmedicines>

This includes support materials for clinical teams who are initiating patients on or switching them to the preferred product:

- MMP product information sheet for Brabio®
- Information on patient support services for Brabio®
- Template switching letter for clinics

## Who should I contact if I have any questions?

MMP pharmacists are available to engage with consultants and clinical teams to provide support for initiation of, and switching to the identified preferred product. Please contact the MMP ([mmp@hse.ie](mailto:mmp@hse.ie)) if you wish to avail of this support.



## Information for Patients about Medicines containing Glatiramer Acetate

**February 2021**

Glatiramer acetate is a medicine used in the treatment of relapsing remitting forms of multiple sclerosis. There are now a number of products available that contain glatiramer acetate.

### What is the preferred product for glatiramer acetate?

The preferred product identified by the HSE for glatiramer acetate is Brabio®. It has been tested to show that it is just as safe and effective as the original medicine Copaxone®.

### What's changing?

From **February 2021**, we are changing the way medicines containing glatiramer acetate are prescribed under the HSE's High Tech Arrangement.

### I am a new patient, what do the changes mean for me?

- From **1 February 2021**, if you are starting treatment on glatiramer acetate, you will be prescribed the preferred product Brabio®.

### What's the definition of a new patient?

A new patient, is an adult, who has not been prescribed or received glatiramer acetate within the last six months.

### I am an existing patient prescribed glatiramer acetate, what does the change mean for me?

- If you are an existing patient, you will continue to receive your medicine from your community pharmacy. The changes outlined above do not apply to you.

If you are currently on Copaxone®, your consultant or a member of their team may discuss with you the possibility of switching to Brabio®.

### **Does my consultant know about these changes?**

Yes. Consultants in neurology are aware of these changes.

### **Why have the changes been introduced?**

The preferred product costs less than the original medicine. Switching patients to it will save the HSE money. This means we can give new innovative medicines to even more patients.

### **What supports are available?**

Supports for patients prescribed this medicine include:

- home nurse visit to provide training on administering the injection
- supply of sharps bins and waste collection service
- access to patient support telephone line
- provision of product information

Your consultant or a member of their team will register you for these services.

### **Where can I get more information on the preferred product?**

Further information for patients is available on the following websites:

**HSE-Medicines Management Programme:** <https://www.hse.ie/yourmedicines> under Best-value medicines

**MS Ireland:** <https://www.ms-society.ie/media/104>