

Advances in therapeutics . . . the sick note

The sick note is the best understood of a series of therapies known collectively as the certificates. The certificates have in common a similar chemical structure, having a base of processed wood pulp on which is superimposed a characteristic and unique signature.

Pathophysiology: the vitamin M system

Vitamin M is a vital requirement for health. Normally vitamin M flows intermittently (in cycles of one calendar month) from the vault of the employer to the account of the patient. The certificates facilitate the transfer of vitamin M to the reserves of the patient when the normal mechanisms for such transfer are impaired. The certificates work via a second messenger system (the benefit system), which provides an alternative source of vitamin M.

Impairment may be permanent as a predictable effect of aging (the state of retirement) or transient (as a result of injury or other illness). Permanent age-related impairment triggers a reflex transfer of vitamin M without the requirement for certificate therapy; the size of the transfer is predetermined and a direct proportion of the average vitamin M turnover in the three years before the reflex is triggered. As well as the conditions noted above, there is a fulminant idiopathic condition in which vitamin M transfer fails: this is known as redundancy (or 'the sack'), and a chronic state of impairment in young females running a self-limiting course of seven months. In 1999 a certificate was described that was effective for up to two weeks in alleviating the sympathetically mediated feelings of intermittent euphoria and despair and sensations of impending financial disaster in male partners of afflicted females.

It is worth noting that disease of excess of the vitamin M axis also exists. In the worst of the acquired forms of the disease, a random event gives rise to a gross oversupply

(winning the lottery). More common is the inherited form, a condition which is usually passed to the oldest male child.

Pharmacology

The sick note activates the second messenger system known as statutory sick pay. Sick notes are licensed for patients over 16 years of age. The dose is not contingent on size or age, as the second messenger system automatically compensates for the Vitamin M deficiency. Duration of therapy should not exceed six months without specialist input from the local occupational health department.

Contraindications

Exposure to the sun: excessive exposure can result in a contagious form of ocular jaundice that is easily caught and spread between work mates. If exposure to the sun is essential, dark glasses and other aids to disability should be used to preserve the impression that therapy is still necessary. Exposure to sun abroad may prevent the spread of ocular jaundice.

Alternative medicines

The acquisition of alternative sources of natural vitamin M from the vaults of other employers while the sick note is in use is dangerous and illegal.

Side effects – addiction and dependency

The supply of an alternative source of vitamin M can lead to a state of physical and mental deactivation ('on the sick') that results in an attenuation and in extreme cases atrophy of the normal channels for vitamin M supply. This situation is more likely to occur where there is a high incidence of the idiopathic fulminant form in the community. The sick note is to be seen as part of the ongoing rehabilitation of the sufferer, rather than as a permanent alternative source of vitamin M.

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Erratum

The *Journal* wishes to apologise to Ms Swarup Patel, MRCOG for referring to her as Mr Patel in the article on Polycystic Ovary Syndrome in the September 2005 issue.