We appreciate that the rising cost of healthcare and medicines are of concern and that the Governments of all four countries in the UK require to control the cost of medicines to their respective National Health Services. In this instance, we support the approach being proposed by Scottish Government to align with that of the Westminster Government.

It is our understanding that these changes will enable further transparency around the cost of medicines provided to NHS Scotland and help ensure that prices of medicines are reasonable and proportionate, and are therefore to be welcomed. Furthermore, we understand that the current devolved processes involved in agreeing the cost of medicines to NHS Scotland is robust and these proposals would not involve major change.

We would like to be assured that any changes in practice emerging from the new powers of obtaining information are applied equally to all routes supplying medicines to patients i.e. to both pharmacies and dispensing doctors.

Our expectation is that patients have access to the medicines they require in a timely manner. We are mindful of the need to ensure continuity of supply for patients where no suitable alternatives are available.

We are also aware of instances involving a number of products where the price has increased disproportionately when patents have expired and the product has moved from being branded to being generic. The NHS should expect to pay a proportionate maximum price for these medicines when all reasonable factors have been taken into account, and the Department of Health and devolved administrations should have the ability to intervene when necessary in the interests of ensuring a fairer price and continuity of supply.

We therefore support the proposed changes.