



Ministry
of Defence

LEO DOCHERTY MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE AND MINISTER
FOR DEFENCE PEOPLE AND VETERANS

MSU/4/4/2/6/TF

Dear Tobias,

14 July 2021

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 June 2021 regarding the use of mefloquine (also known by the trade name Lariam) in the UK Armed Forces. I am grateful for the opportunity to update the HCDC and provide a copy of the latest biannual official statistic on the number of mefloquine prescriptions given to UK Armed Forces personnel focused on the period 1 October 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021, there were 3,862 prescriptions for antimalarial drugs, of which four were for mefloquine, therefore mefloquine prescriptions accounted for just 0.1% of all antimalarials prescribed. Of the four prescriptions made for mefloquine between 1 October 2020 and 31 March 2021, four (100%) had a record of a face-to-face risk assessment prior to, or at the time of, prescription and four (100%) had an alternative antimalarial drug offered but the patient declined it.

Between 12 September 2016, the introduction of the new MOD policy and data capture techniques, and 31 March 2021, there was a total of 46,212 antimalarial prescriptions made for UK Armed Forces personnel, of which 247 (0.5%) were for mefloquine. Prescriptions made for mefloquine as a proportion of all antimalarials have fallen since 2016.

The MOD continues to publish official statistics on the use of mefloquine to allow the HCDC and the public to monitor compliance with the Department's policy on malaria prevention. I enclose a copy of the latest statistical bulletin published on 13 May 2021. Official statistics on the mefloquine prescribing in the UK Armed Forces are published biannually at the following link: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mefloquine-lariam-prescribing-in-the-uk-armed-forces-12-september-2016-to-31-march-2021>

I trust this clarifies the Department's position.

Yours sincerely,

Leo Docherty MP,
Minister for Defence People and Veterans

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Defence Committee

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23 June 2021

I have received letters from my predecessor, Dr Julian Lewis MP and Dr Marriott, who contributed to the Defence Committee's inquiry into Lariam in 2015-16. Dr Lewis and Dr Marriott share concerns about an internally peer reviewed paper, published in BMJ Military Health in 2020 on the use of Lariam, which downplays the risks of its use and that new quinoline antimalarials are being developed, which may have similar side-effects to Lariam.

We received the last annual update on Lariam from the Ministry of Defence on 21 January 2020. I would be grateful if you could provide us with the overdue update and some assurance, that the Ministry of Defence has not relaxed the prescription of Lariam to UK Armed Forces personnel.

Rt Hon. Tobias Ellwood MP
Chair of the Defence Committee

[Copied to Dr Julian Lewis and Dr Marriott]