

RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin

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A joint initiative of the Patient Services Section and the Drug and Therapeutics Information Service of the Pharmacy Department, Repatriation General Hospital, Daw Park, South Australia. The RGH Pharmacy E-Bulletin is distributed in electronic format on a weekly basis, and aims to present concise, factual information on issues of current interest in therapeutics, drug safety and cost-effective use of medications.

Editor: Assoc. Prof. Chris Alderman, University of South Australia – Director of Pharmacy, RGH

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Pharmaceutical reforms in South Australian Hospitals

South Australian public hospitals are currently preparing to implement a process of pharmaceutical reform aimed at improving medication management and quality use of medicines (QUM) for patients as they move between hospital and the community. The Pharmaceutical Reforms comprise three central elements: access to the Commonwealth's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for public hospital outpatients and admitted patients on discharge; access to a list of chemotherapy medications subsidised by the Commonwealth Government for day-admitted patients and outpatients; and implementation of the Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Council's (APAC) '*Guiding principles to achieve continuity in medication management*'.

Equity of access to medication and safety, quality and continuity in medication management are the central objectives of the Pharmaceutical Reform process. By enabling public hospitals to access the same pharmaceutical scheme that operates in both the community sector and private hospitals the reforms aim to ensure equity of access to medications for patients irrespective of their health care setting. By requiring participating hospitals to implement APAC's Guiding Principles the reforms aim to improve medication management and the communication of medication related information as patients enter and leave hospital. Evidence indicates that multidisciplinary service models which embrace APAC's Guiding Principles improve the continuity of QUM across different health care settings and are associated with reduced medication related adverse events, hospital re-admissions and improvements in functional health status.

The reforms will enable hospital doctors to prescribe PBS medications for all public hospital outpatients and admitted patients on discharge. Patients will be provided with up to one month's supply of medication, or a clinically appropriate quantity, rather than the two to seven days supply that is currently provided. As a result, a patient's first post-hospital general practitioner visit can be scheduled for a time which best suits the patient and the course of their recovery rather than just for the purpose of obtaining a continued supply of medication. Patients will be able to have their PBS prescription dispensed at the hospital pharmacy or alternatively can choose to take it to a community pharmacy. Irrespective of where the PBS medication is dispensed the co-payment charged will be the same. Collectively the reforms will make it easier and more convenient for patients to access appropriate quantities of medication as they move between hospital and the community.

Pharmaceutical reform will help facilitate standardised and widespread adoption of the APAC Guiding Principles. The Guiding Principles promote leadership, responsibility and accountability in medication management and outline key activities for ensuring the quality use of medicines across the health care continuum. These activities include accurate medication history, pharmaceutical review and reconciliation, the preparation of medication care plan, medication counselling and the timely transfer of medication related information. South Australian public hospitals have made a commitment to implementing these activities as part of the reform process.

Pharmaceutical Reform in South Australian public hospitals comprises two central outcomes including access to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) and implementation of the APAC Guiding Principles. The process of Pharmaceutical Reform both supports and progresses two of the central objectives encompassed in Australia's National Medicines Policy, namely equity of access to medication and QUM. Accordingly the reforms are an important initiative to help achieve optimal health outcomes for all Australians.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION – CONTACT THE PHARMACY DEPARTMENT ON 82751763 or email: chris.alderman@rgh.sa.gov.au
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