

PANDEMIC COMMUNICATION: COVID-19 PHARMACY UPDATE

31 MARCH 2020

Thank you for all the hard work you have been doing and continue to do. We know pharmacy teams have been under incredible pressure and they have responded incredibly well. Last week was unprecedented, despite attempts to try to moderate the public response. We are aware of the pressure on your teams, and the concerns regarding PPE and financial sustainability.

We are trying to gather together some of the issues to cut down on the number of emails you get. Here are some of the things we can tell you about. Please do continue to let us know of concerns and how we can continue to assist you. In this advice we cover the following:

- Funding
- Clozapine
- PPE
- Workforce demands
- Flu vaccinations
- Prescriptions

FUNDING

See the attached message from DHBs about the COVID-19 Pharmacy Support Package. The funding is to be used at your discretion. It recognises the pressures you are facing and the importance of your continued operation during this time. Payment is imminent – code is COVID19_PSP. The Ministry and DHBs continue to monitor the financial sustainability of Pharmacies recognising your importance in supporting our community.

WORKFORCE PRESSURE

Please continue to report any issues or constraints – especially workforce. We are aware of the pressures that you are experiencing. Note the Pharmacy Council is helping match up needs with additional pharmacist availability. If you need help please contact us on email: COVID-19commWorkforce@ccdhb.org.nz.

Requests should include:

1. Location for the work
2. Type of work/key skills/Quals (e.g. NZQA)
3. No. of Staff required
4. COVID risk assessment /PPE required
5. Days/Time estimate of work
6. On site contact details
7. Urgency of placement
8. Casual contract yes/no

CLOZAPINE ADVICE

Any person who has been taking clozapine in excess of one year without a blood test result at the orange or red alert level may miss blood tests during the lockdown as the risk of exposure to COVID-19 exceeds their risk of agranulocytosis or neutropenia. See the attached advice.

PPE

Many of you will have seen the advice we've been given by the Ministry on the priority and use of PPE. Refer to [Guidance for prioritising personal protective equipment \(Word, 23 KB\)](#) dated 27 March [on this page under PPE and hand hygiene posters](#). We acknowledge that your staff may be concerned and want masks and gloves so we are arranging boxes of PPE to be distributed to all pharmacies. We have limited supplies of hand sanitiser and will provide this where we can. These will be with you all of you by end of this week. Our team is working hard to ensure supply and appreciate the urgency of this matter.

FLU-VAX IS AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE.

Please continue to provide these. Some pharmacies are using their carpark, where safely possible, to reduce entry to the pharmacy and still observe people for the [required time](#). Others have used cones to block off some carpark spaces. Also, remember to get people to book ahead and bring a supporter. As always, if people are unwell they cannot receive a flu vaccine.

SIGNATURE-EXEMPT SCRIPTS

Remember that you may be receiving scripts without signatures now which must be provided through NZePS. Here's a [link](#) to a helpful Ministry of Health Q&A about this.

DISCHARGE SCRIPTS

To support hospital flow, wherever possible, please make these a priority where the medicines are needed to treat the patient's reason for hospitalisation – e.g. antibiotics. Hospital Chief Pharmacists are advising their Medical and Nursing counterparts to give plenty of notice, and phone ahead when meds need to be blister packed.

REQUIREMENT TO HAVE ORIGINAL OF FAXED SCRIPT IS SUSPENDED

The enforcement of the obligation to obtain an original of a faxed prescription during the state of emergency will be suspended by the Ministry on the conditions set out below:

- faxed prescriptions must otherwise be fully compliant with regulation 41 of the Medicines Regulations 1984
- suspension will not apply to controlled drugs prescriptions which will continue to require an original prescriber signature; and
- suspension will only apply to dispensing activity by pharmacies that occurs during Level 3 or 4 COVID-19 Alert System periods and for the time period prior from 1 March 2020 (inclusive) to close of business 23 March 2020 and for any other such other period as the Ministry may subsequently advise you in writing.

Faxed prescriptions meeting the suspension conditions will not be subject to adverse audit comment or recovery action during future audits.

PRESCRIPTION EMAILS

If you want scripts sent to a different email address than your usual pharmacy email address, please send the changes to Olivia.gilsenan@huttvalleydhb.org.nz and we will pass this on to practices and the hospital.

Once again, thank you all for the excellent work you are doing in such challenging times. We will continue to update and inform you if there are any changes to the advice we are giving.

Keith Fraser Community IMT