



20th March 2020

COVID-19 PLANNING - INFORMATION FOR PHARMACIES, LPCs and staff

Dear Colleague,

We have considered carefully how to continue to best support people on opiate substitution therapy (OST) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our plan is based on the principle that it is always safer for opioid dependent people to have OST available to take home, rather than be off OST and feel compelled to use street opioids. However, this needs to be tempered with supporting our vulnerable clients to practice social distancing in order to safeguard their own health. Additionally, we need to support our community pharmacies to be able to continue to provide access to medicines for the whole community that they serve.

Prescriptions

We have made the decision to move the majority of clients to take home OST which may be weekly/two weekly or in some cases longer. This will be done based on individual client risk assessment.

Our services will be changing prescriptions over the next few days. This may mean that a client's prescription is stopped mid way and a new prescription issued. Our staff will ensure robust communication with pharmacy teams to reduce the risk of double dosing.

Supervised Consumption

We intend to move away from supervised consumption as far as possible, however a minority of clients will need to remain on this due to their individual risks and we would ask you to support us in this.

Medication Supplies in your Pharmacy

We recognise increasing the dispensing of take home OST may pose some challenges for pharmacies particularly in relation to storage of stock. We therefore advise the following to help reduce this burden:

1. Utilise regular daily wholesale deliveries to replenish stock rather than ordering in bulk.
2. Utilise pharmacy owings to allow all clients to have ongoing access to OST and to prevent some clients being left without.

We are in regular communication with both manufacturers and wholesalers keeping them updated so they can adjust the stock and supply in line with demand.

Needle/Syringe Provision

If you provide a needle/syringe service under contract with us, please keep this running wherever possible, as now more than ever, it is vital that we get clean equipment out there to

ensure minimise risk of spread of BBV and other related harm from reuse of needles.

Clients should be given whatever they need in order to keep themselves safe, and are able to collect for friends who may be self-isolating due to coronavirus but we would suggest that two weeks supply would be a suitable amount. Our supplier (Orion Medical) has assured us that they are able to replenish pharmacies quickly in order to meet demand.

Face to face appointments in our services

Services are reducing face to face appointments and utilising telephone and virtual platforms to conduct assessments. We are also running with smaller teams to reduce exposure to the virus to enable essential services to continue.

Finally, please can you let your local service know promptly if your pharmacy is forced to close so we can make the necessary arrangements to support our clients.

Thank you for your ongoing hard work and commitment during this difficult time.

With kind regards

Dr Rachel Britton
Director of Pharmacy

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