

# MEDICATION SAFETY

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care

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## National Medication Safety and Quality Scoping Study Committee Report

A report recommending actions to improve national medication safety and quality is available on the Commission web site at [http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/com-pubs\\_NIMC/\\$File/25185-Report.pdf](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/com-pubs_NIMC/$File/25185-Report.pdf)

The report is by the National Medication Safety and Quality Scoping Study Committee (the Committee) which was convened by the Commission:

- to consider the adequacy of current medication safety and quality activities;
- to identify gaps in national medication safety and quality activities;
- to recommend a national approach to improving the safety and quality of medicines use.

The Committee's report includes 45 recommended actions for improving national medication safety and quality. The recommendations relate not just to the work of the Commission but to the many organisations involved in national medication safety and quality.

The report recommendations will inform both the Commission's current medication safety work and planning for future activity.

## New paediatric NIMC 2009 charts

New paediatric versions of the NIMC 2009 and NIMC long stay 2009 are available on the Commission web site. The versions incorporate changes reflected in the standard medication charts, as well as the specific paediatric safety features agreed by Health Ministers for use with all paediatric patients in Australian hospitals.

In May 2009, the Commission conducted a workshop in Adelaide which focused on implementing the paediatric charts and

medication safety in children. Over 40 people, including State/Territory and clinician representatives, participated in the one day program. Presentations on implementation of the paediatric chart, and on key safety issues in paediatric prescribing, were followed by question and answer sessions. Some members of the Medication Safety Group of Children's Hospitals Australasia presented on their specialist areas and participated in panel discussions.

A report on the workshop is available at [http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC\\_010\\_PM-Charts\\_Impl&Using](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC_010_PM-Charts_Impl&Using).

## New four A4 page NIMC

A new four A4 page version of the NIMC has been endorsed for use and is available on the Commission web site. It is designed for incorporation into general practice (GP) electronic prescribing systems used to prescribe for inpatients in rural and remote hospitals.

Most GP e-prescribing systems are not able to issue medication orders in complying NIMC formats for admitted patients because the NIMC is double side printed on A3 paper. The NIMC Oversight Committee endorsed the four A4 page NIMC intending for it to be incorporated into GP e-prescribing systems as they upgrade to new versions. It will allow GPs using A4 single side (or double side) printers to issue NIMC complying medication orders.

The Medical Industry Software Association (representing GP e-prescribing software vendors) has been informed of the endorsement and its members encouraged to incorporate the new four A4 page version of the NIMC into subsequent software upgrades.

User guidelines for the chart have been developed and are available on the Commission website along with the chart.

Hospitals using the charts will need to develop local policies for managing the chart.

### Jurisdictional NIMC contacts

Each jurisdiction nominates a representative to the NIMC Oversight Committee. The jurisdictional representatives provide an important link between the States and Territories and national NIMC developments. NIMC users can contact their local representative for information on the NIMC and related matters. Contact details for the jurisdictional representatives follow:

#### NIMC Oversight Committee – State and Territory representatives

State	Contact	Email address
NSW	Ms Penny Thornton	<a href="mailto:pthor@doh.health.nsw.gov.au">pthor@doh.health.nsw.gov.au</a>
ACT	Ms Alice Jones	<a href="mailto:alice.jones@act.gov.au">alice.jones@act.gov.au</a>
Vic	Dr Colin Feekery	<a href="mailto:colin.feekery@easternhealth.org.au">colin.feekery@easternhealth.org.au</a>
Qld	Dr Julie Stokes	<a href="mailto:julie_a_stokes@health.qld.gov.au">julie_a_stokes@health.qld.gov.au</a>
SA	Ms Naomi Burgess	<a href="mailto:naomi.burgess@health.sa.gov.au">naomi.burgess@health.sa.gov.au</a>
WA	Mr Luke Slawomirski	<a href="mailto:luke.slawomirski@health.wa.gov.au">luke.slawomirski@health.wa.gov.au</a>
Tas	Ms Amber Roberts	<a href="mailto:amber.roberts@dhhs.tas.gov.au">amber.roberts@dhhs.tas.gov.au</a>
NT	Mr Kieran Behan	<a href="mailto:kieran.behan@nt.gov.au">kieran.behan@nt.gov.au</a>

### Guidelines for local NIMC management

The NIMC Oversight Committee approved a new version of the *Jurisdictional guidelines for local NIMC management* (the guidelines) at its meeting of 13 February 2009. It is available on the Commission web site at [http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC\\_004\\_LocalMgmt](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC_004_LocalMgmt)

The guidelines provide advice to States and Territories on local management of the NIMC including how to respond to local requests for change and elevating issues to the national level for consideration by the NIMC Oversight Committee.

The new version incorporates changes suggested by local NIMC users, States and Territories, Therapeutic Advisory Groups and from the 2008 NIMC quality improvement project.

### National labelling recommendations for parenteral medicines, lines and fluids

The Commission has commenced development of national labelling recommendations for parenteral medicines, lines and fluids. Addressing this practice area was identified as a national priority in the National Medication Safety and Quality Scoping Study Committee Report.

Building on earlier work by the NSW Therapeutic Advisory Group, the project will:

- test the NSW labelling recommendations in 10 pilot sites and tailor them for national application;
- develop a guide for implementation of the recommendations by hospitals;
- provide an online education tool.

Parenteral medicines are an area of significant risk for hospital patients. Multiple manipulations required to prepare the drug, combined with inadequate or absent labelling, are major contributors to medication errors. The labelling of injectable medicines and fluids during their preparation and administration, and the labelling of devices used to deliver these, is a major patient safety issue. The project aims to reduce harm to patients by improving practice in this high risk area.

Contact officer for the project is Diana Shipp who can be contacted at [nswtag@stvincents.com.au](mailto:nswtag@stvincents.com.au)

### Guidelines for use of the NIMC

The *Guidelines for use of the National Inpatient Medication Chart* have been updated to include 2009 version changes and the special features of the Paediatric NIMC. Copies are available from the Commission website under *Support materials for the National Inpatient Medication Chart* at [http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC\\_001](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC_001)

### National Safety and Quality Framework

Consultation on the proposed National Safety and Quality Framework has begun. Details on the proposal, and how to comment, are available at <http://www.qualityhealthcareconversation.org.au/> Have your say and share your views on the future safety and quality of Australian health care. Submissions and feedback on the proposed framework close on 11 September 2009.

## National insulin charts for acute care

The Commission has been approached by many hospitals requesting national insulin charts to improve the management of insulin use.

Improving the safety of insulin prescribing, monitoring and documentation of administration in acute care is a patient safety priority.

In July 2008 the NIMC Oversight Committee agreed to form a National Insulin Prescribing and Administering Chart (NIPAC) Committee to plan for a pilot of sub-cutaneous and intravenous infusion insulin charts. Insulin charts developed by Queensland Health were the basis of discussion and planning as they have been implemented in 80% of that State's hospital beds. Although these charts have been extensively trialled and piloted in Queensland, the NIPAC Committee considered some additional safety features would enhance the benefit of the charts.

Queensland Health will pilot a modification of its charts incorporating additional safety elements. They will report back to the NIPAC Committee which will recommend whether this chart will form the basis for a national insulin chart pilot. In addition, significant work is underway in NSW on developing a State insulin prescribing and administering chart which will further inform possible national insulin chart development.

## VTE prophylaxis prescribing and the NIMC

The Commission is exploring incorporation of a dedicated venous thromboembolism (VTE) prescribing and administering space on the NIMC. This was identified during the 2008 NIMC quality improvement project. Further investigation of the matter was recommended by the NIMC workshop held last September in Adelaide and which considered a range of suggested changes to the NIMC.

VTE prevention is a priority for many hospitals. At a national level, the National Institute of Clinical Studies undertook a VTE prevention program in 40 public hospitals nationally in 2006. Currently the Commission funds the National Institute of Clinical Studies to extend the program into 36 Australian private hospitals.

A working group, consisting of jurisdictional and clinical representatives, is considering the data on benefit from including dedicated VTE prophylaxis prescribing in the NIMC, and the safest and most effective design. The group expects to make recommendations to the Commission in October 2009.

## Private hospital NIMC

A private hospital NIMC has been developed for facilities using medication charts with tear away sections. The private hospital NIMC is available from the Commission web site. It replicates the NIMC design and safety features but incorporates tear away sections for pharmacy orders and Medicare Australia payment authentication.

Many private hospitals have implemented the standard NIMC. If your hospital requires doctors to prescribe on a script pad, and then to annotate a medication chart, you can implement the standard NIMC in your facility. Adopting the NIMC will require a communication and education strategy to inform staff of the NIMC and its safety features, and an implementation strategy to ensure it is rolled out effectively. There is a range of tools to support education, implementation, use and auditing of the NIMC available on the Commission web site.

Some private hospitals have been using medication charts with tear away sections for pharmacy orders and Medicare Australia payment authentication. There will be challenges for those hospitals to implement the standard NIMC because it will require prescribers to return to prescription pad ordering in addition to writing on the medication chart.

## Private hospital day surgery NIMC

Private hospitals expressed a need for a day surgery medication chart. The Private Hospital Day Surgery NIMC 2009 is an A4 document with tear offs for pharmacy orders and Medicare Australia authentication, and is designed for use in private hospital day surgery settings. It is available from the Commission web site.

The issue of a day surgery-specific medication chart for public hospitals was discussed by NIMC Oversight Committee members. Public hospital representatives considered the standard NIMC adequate for day surgery use and saw risk from introducing an additional chart. The issue will continue to be monitored by Committee members.

The private hospital NIMC and private hospital day surgery NIMC are available at [http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC\\_003\\_PrivateSector\\_Info](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC_003_PrivateSector_Info)

## Medication safety alerts and guidance

The Commission's Web site has a new medication safety alerts page. The content includes the two existing national medication safety alerts and links to selected medication safety alerts and guidance on high risk drugs and processes available from local and international sources. These include Australian State health departments, the UK National Patient Safety Agency, the Institute of Safe Medication Practice (ISMP) and ISMP Canada.

Currently the Commission is consulting with other organisations involved in medication safety on how the Commission can identify a need for national medication safety alerts and a process to obtain agreement on their content and advice. Advice on further national medication safety alerts and guidance is expected to be put before the Commission in late 2009.

## Medication safety literature reviews

The National Prescribing Service has released a review of the literature on medication safety in the community.

[http://www.nps.org.au/research\\_and\\_evaluation/research/current\\_research/medication\\_safety\\_community](http://www.nps.org.au/research_and_evaluation/research/current_research/medication_safety_community)

This review complements the Commission's publication *Literature review: Medication safety in acute care in Australia 2008*.

[http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC\\_005\\_Pubs&Websites](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/internet/safety/publishing.nsf/Content/NIMC_005_Pubs&Websites)

## High 5s medication reconciliation project

The Commission will shortly be seeking expressions of interest from 10 hospitals or area/regional health services willing to test a standard operating protocol designed to assure medication accuracy at transitions of care. Participating hospitals will have an opportunity to focus on medication reconciliation in high risk areas. They will also have high visibility and

recognition from implementing and evaluating the standing operating protocol and for their leadership in standardising patient care processes.

The program is part of the World Health Organization's High 5s patient safety project. It is an international collaborative project for which the Commission is the Australian lead technical agency.

An information package containing a description of the standing operating protocol, associated implementation and evaluation strategies and the expression of interest form will be available on the Commission Web site.

Assuring medication accuracy at transitions of care, through medication reconciliation, is one of five evidence based solutions for patient safety within the World Health Organization's High 5s project. Australia is one of up to ten countries (which include UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia as lead countries) participating in the High 5s program. Further information about the High 5s program is available from <http://www.high5s.org/bin/view>

The High 5s standing operating protocol for assuring medication accuracy at transitions of care is consistent with Australian practice and aligns with the former Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Council's *Guiding principles to achieve continuity in medication management*.

This is a five year project. The first phase of the project is the introduction of medication reconciliation in patients 65 years of age and older who are admitted to a medical ward from the emergency department. In subsequent phases, the scope will be expanded to include all patients at all entry points to inpatient and outpatient settings.

The project will commence in early 2010. The information package and expression of interest form will be posted on the Commission Web site on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2009. Closing date for submissions will be 30 October 2009.

**Contact us**

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