

18 December 2020

Adjunct Professor John Skerritt  
Deputy Secretary for Health Products Regulation  
Department of Health

By email to: [John.Skerritt@health.gov.au](mailto:John.Skerritt@health.gov.au)

Dear Professor Skerritt

**Re: Request for revised clinical guidance to support safe and effective prescribing of antidepressants to paediatric and adolescent patients**

Thank you for your letter of 7 October 2020 advising of the findings from the recent Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) review of antidepressant prescribing in paediatric and adolescent population, and to request the support of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) in implementing the review's recommendations.

The RANZCP notes the request that the RANZCP, together with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP), work to develop joint clinical guidance to support the safe and effective prescribing of antidepressants in this population. We are supportive of this request as have been aware that the guidance currently available requires updating to support clinical best practice, based on evidence, particularly in the primary care setting. We are also aware that professional collaboration will be essential to ensuring the development and successful implementation of any guidance.

This need has previously been identified by the RANZCP in response to the variation in prescribing practice as outlined in the Atlas of Healthcare Variation and we have previously engaged with the RACGP and the RACP, most recently at the end of 2018, to seek interest in progressing this project. However, to develop sufficiently comprehensive and relevant guidance that apply across professional groups requires significant time and resources. Accordingly, this work was postponed pending the publication of the updated RANZCP Clinical Practice Guidelines for Mood Disorders, expected early 2021, in anticipation that this may include material that could be used for this purpose. However, on further review, it is likely that the development of guidelines specifically for the paediatric and adolescent populations will still require significant additional work to be sufficiently useful. We would therefore be grateful for your advice on the potential availability of government funding for this work, which will help inform our ongoing discussions with the RACGP and RACP on this matter.

We are aware of the final report of the review, *Antidepressant utilisation and risk of suicide in young people: Safety investigation* was published last week and note that the TGA will explore potential analysis of linked Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Medicare Benefits Schedule, hospital and death data to further investigate the relationship between

antidepressants and rates of youth suicide. The RANZCP is supportive of that work to inform best practice and we would be grateful to be kept informed about any developments with this data review, particularly should it be relevant to guideline development in this area.

To discuss any of the issues raised in this letter, I can be contacted via Rosie Forster, Executive Manager, Practice, Policy and Partnerships Department via [rosie.forster@ranzcp.org](mailto:rosie.forster@ranzcp.org) or by phone on (03) 9601 4943.

Yours sincerely



Associate Professor John Allan  
**President**

Ref: 2027

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