

Opioid Maintenance Treatment (OMT) dose delivery during COVID-19 isolation or quarantine

Process for facilitating OMT provision to patients in isolation or quarantine

Do not put yourself at risk of contracting COVID-19 through direct contact with clients in quarantine. Follow this procedure to ensure unsupervised doses can be provided safely during the quarantine period.

1. Talk to the patient about their OMT requirements

- Ask the patient to verify, if possible, their need to be quarantined or self-isolated. Identify the length of the quarantine or self-isolation period for the patient.
- Undertake a Client Stability Assessment and other relevant clinical assessments to determine the number of unsupervised doses that may be delivered to the patient at any one time (if required this can be a single dose each day).
- Consider prescribing naloxone to patients receiving unsupervised doses either for the first time or in significantly larger numbers than usual, particularly for patients using methadone. Ask the patient to contact Canberra Alliance for Health Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA) on 02 6253 3643 if they need support to access and learn more about naloxone.

2. Assist the patient with nominating an agent. This can be a:

- friend or family member of the client who is over the age of 18, not subject to quarantine, and considered appropriate by both you and the pharmacist/RN where the patient usually collects their doses; or
- Government-funded third party (Directions Health Services); or
- if the client is currently in residential rehabilitation or other Therapeutic Community, the relevant organisation can be nominated.
- Ensure the patient has access to a copy of the 'ACTHD information for OMT patients in quarantine' and verbally indicated that they have understood its contents.
- Confirm the address where the patient will be living during quarantine.

3. Ensure appropriate paperwork is completed

- Options for remote prescribing are permitted under ACT law (including for schedule 8 (controlled) medicines), including telephone, faxed or electronic prescriptions¹. An original

¹ Sections 31, 40 and 41 Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008.

written prescription must be sent to the pharmacy within 24 hours for a telephone or faxed prescription.

- The patient will need to have all their doses during the quarantine period administered as **unsupervised**. You may need to apply for approval for an increase in the patient's unsupervised doses up to 14 days, where this is not already authorised by your approval for the patient. If the period of isolation is longer than 14 days, this may require further approval.
- To enable provision of all doses as unsupervised, you may need to apply for an *Approval by Drug* to increase the unsupervised doses supplied to the patient beyond Category 3A or 3B approval limits in the Controlled Medicines Prescribing Standards, with the COVID-19 pandemic considered 'special circumstances'. You must conduct a stability assessment of the client using the Client Stability Assessment Form and submit to the Health Protection Service (HPS) with the application.
- If you are working in a public institution, you have interim standing approval to prescribe controlled medicines (including increase takeaways) for a patient of the institution. However, you must apply for a Chief Health Officer (CHO) approval within 72 hours of prescribing the controlled medicine for the patient².
- GP or other OMT prescribers will need CHO approval prior to increasing the patient's unsupervised doses (unless the takeaway doses are already authorised under a patient's Category 3B approval for suboxone). Increases to unsupervised dosing approval in most cases will be provided for a maximum of eight weeks per approval.
- Write a new prescription including unsupervised doses as appropriate for the patient's quarantine or self-isolation period.

4. Liaise with the pharmacy/ADS clinic

- Ensure the dosing point is aware of the quarantine/isolation requirements for the patient.
- Provide the updated prescription, including nominating the maximum number of unsupervised doses which may be provided at any one time.
- Discuss the appropriate agent for the patient and confirm the dosing point will contact Directions Health Service if appropriate OMTDeliveries@directionshealth.com

5. Follow up with the patient and dosing point as required

- We recommend ongoing telehealth appointments where required.
- Establish updated dosing schedule once the expected quarantine/isolation period has ended.

² Section 557 of Medicines Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008