

26th March 2020

Dear MATOD prescriber

The current COVID-19 pandemic is creating new challenges for healthcare. The MATOD (pharmacotherapy)¹ treatment system has been identified as a priority area.

I write to you from the [Area 4 Pharmacotherapy Network](#), a state-funded initiative working to support the opioid pharmacotherapy system, led by South Eastern Melbourne PHN and Eastern Melbourne PHN.

During this time it is likely that health professionals will need to work in different ways to ensure continuity of treatment for pharmacotherapy patients and associated supports for prescribers and pharmacies providing pharmacotherapy.

Roster of Alternate Prescribers

One such strategy is the creation of a 'Roster of Alternate Prescribers'. This is a place based response in the event of a prescriber becoming unable to continue patient care, and where there is not capacity within his/her practice to continue treatment.

In such a situation it may be necessary to nominate an alternate local prescriber(s) who is willing and able to temporarily take on the pharmacotherapy patient load to ensure continuity of treatment. Therefore we are asking you, as a MATOD prescriber, to engage with your local MATOD prescriber colleagues and create a prescribing support network in the event that a prescriber is unable to continue providing care.

Area 4 Pharmacotherapy Network is also developing a database of local prescribers' capacity and availability to assist, and as such is available to aid you to establish these support networks.

Prescriptions – reduce need for patient attendance at practice and pharmacy

Another strategy is to lengthen script validity and minimise the number of patient visits to the pharmacy. We ask that you consider increasing the duration of pharmacotherapy scripts (up to a maximum of 6 months) and to increase the number of take-aways where clinically appropriate.

We recommend an appropriate risk assessment is made and that you liaise closely with pharmacy colleagues to monitor progress. Please prescribe Naloxone on a PBS prescription to each pharmacotherapy patient to reduce risk of harms to the patient.

Experts are working together to develop resources to support prescribers providing pharmacotherapy during these exceptional times.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, but rest assured we will continue to try to mitigate any challenges and will be keeping you informed at all times.

¹ Medication Assisted Treatment of Opioid Dependence (MATOD), also referred to as opioid pharmacotherapy and Opioid Replacement Therapy, involves the use of methadone, buprenorphine or buprenorphine-naloxone for the treatment of opioid dependence.

If you have any queries regarding this or any other pharmacotherapy matter, please feel free to contact me or your local Pharmacotherapy Liaison Coordinator:

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Kind Regards,



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