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General Update

New COVID-19 Pharmacotherapy Guidance

Last week the Department of Health and Human Services released new advice and clinical guidance related to Pharmacotherapy/Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Dependence (MATOD) treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic. Click [here](#) to view this important information.

Client Access to Pharmacotherapy during COVID-19

Pharmacotherapy clients are now experiencing greater difficulty with accessing treatment. Please advise [DirectLine](#) and [PAMS](#) if you are able to take on new clients at this time. Registering with [DirectLine](#) and [PAMS](#) does not mean you will be inundated with clients – you will be contacted to obtain your consent on each occasion that a client is referred to you, so rest assured you will have full control of your caseload at all times.

Long Acting Injectable Buprenorphine (LAIB) update

Buvidal® recently became available on the PBS from 3 April; and Sublocade® will be listed from 21 April, 2020. [Click here](#) to view a letter from the Community, Primary, Alcohol & Drugs – Commissioning Unit at DHHS to prescribers and pharmacists. [Click here](#) to view the LAIB discussion paper referenced in this letter.

Pharmacy Update

COVID-19 : Service Continuity Checklist

The COVID-19 outbreak requires pharmacies to prepare and plan ahead for a potential sudden pharmacy and/or pharmacotherapy program closure. Pharmacies can use this [Service Continuity Checklist](#) to ensure they are prepared for this situation. The document includes recommended steps to follow if pharmacy/program closure is necessary.

COVID-19 : MATOD Pharmacy Readiness Survey

Please complete this [3 minute survey](#) to help us understand your needs and preparedness for the impacts of COVID-19. This will enable our Pharmacotherapy Network and the Department of Health and Human Services to better support you if your pharmacy is impacted by COVID-19.

Impact of DHHS COVID-19 measures

Pharmacists might encounter MATOD prescriptions for longer durations and more takeaway doses for some patients (where clinically appropriate) in order to minimise the number of visits to the prescriber and pharmacy. To minimise the associated risks, work closely with

the prescriber in regards to the patient's progress with treatment and suitability for these treatment decisions in conjunction with the [new COVID-19 guidance](#).

SafeScript Reminder

The SafeScript mandatory period commenced on 1 April 2020:

- ❖ Ensure your Prescription Exchange Service (PES) is functioning to ensure your data can be automatically uploaded to SafeScript.
- ❖ Ensure you are dispensing pharmacotherapy/MATOD scripts upon receipt of **each new** pharmacotherapy/MATOD prescription, to ensure they are captured in SafeScript as this information might prove critical for patients displaced from their usual providers due to General Practice or Pharmacy closure.

Prescriber Update

Recommendations for Prescriber self-isolation/illness

- ❖ We recommend that MATOD prescribers engage with local colleagues who are also MATOD-accredited, to create a support network involving prescribers willing to deputise for or to transfer patients to one another in the event of interruption to care. The [Area 4 Pharmacotherapy Network](#) is available to assist you to establish these support networks.
- ❖ Prepare and plan ahead for a potential sudden interruption to your MATOD prescribing using this [MATOD prescriber contingency planning document](#). This document also includes advice about telehealth and sourcing alternative prescribers.

COVID-19 : MATOD Prescriber Readiness Survey

We would like to thank all the prescribers who have already completed our COVID-19 readiness survey either over the phone or via email. Any prescribers who have not had the opportunity to do so, please complete this [5 minute survey](#) to help us understand your needs and preparedness for the impacts of COVID-19. This will enable our Pharmacotherapy Network and the Department of Health and Human Services to better support you if your practice is impacted by COVID-19.

Risk Management – Risk Assessment and Naloxone

- ❖ If you are writing longer scripts and more take-away doses, we recommend an appropriate [risk assessment](#) is made and that you liaise closely with your pharmacy colleagues to monitor patient progress and suitability for these treatment decisions.
- ❖ Please prescribe Naloxone on a PBS prescription to each pharmacotherapy patient to reduce risk of harms to the patient.
- ❖ Contact the [Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service \(DACAS\)](#) or access our [GP Supports](#) for clinical advice if necessary.

For more information or support queries

Visit A4PN.org.au

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Newsletter Edition: Issue 1 (14 April 2020)

Please note: These e-newsletters are intended for prescribers and pharmacies providing MATOD/pharmacotherapy treatment and will be released when key information is made available for dissemination. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact us at A4PN@semphn.org.au.