



Dear General Practices

Updates to the ACT Controlled Medicines Prescribing Standards

I am writing to inform you about changes to the ACT Controlled Medicines Prescribing Standards (the Prescribing Standards).

The Prescribing Standards establish conditions and criteria under which a prescriber may be approved to prescribe a controlled medicine in the ACT under the Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008.

The changes primarily relate to Category 3 for Opioid Maintenance Treatment (OMT) arising due to COVID-19 as well as routine improvements, and include:

- **Insertion of new special case provisions for supply of unsupervised (take away) doses of OMT during a declared public health emergency.**

This authorises up to three additional take away doses of methadone or buprenorphine under a Category 3A or 3B approval or an Approval by Drug during a declared public health emergency (such as COVID-19) to enable rapid commencement or continuation of take away doses for a person unable to attend their usual pharmacy for supervised dosing for reasons outside their control (such as compulsory isolation). Where this provision is used, the prescriber is still required to seek Approval by Drug (or an amendment to their existing Approval by Drug) for the additional take away doses.

- **Updates to ordinary take away limits under Category 3A and 3B approvals.**

This enables earlier commencement and increases in take away doses for buprenorphine/naloxone. Clients may commence take aways after minimum 1 month in treatment (previously 3 months) and may reach the maximum allowance from 9 months (previously 12 months).

The proposed changes provide for a less rigid framework that aligns with equivalent NSW guidelines.

- **Update to the opioid dose conversion ratios and Morphine Equivalence calculator.**

The new ratios reflect those recommended by the Faculty of Pain Medicine, Australian and New Zealand College of Anesthetists (ANZCA). This change impacts the conversion factors for tapentadol and fentanyl which will result in a higher dose being authorised under a Category approval.

The changes follow valued input and consultation with the ACT Opioid Treatment Advisory Committee and Medicines Advisory Committee.

Further information regarding the Prescribing Standards is available on the ACT Health website at <https://www.health.act.gov.au/pss>. Information about medicines management during [COVID-19](#) including OMT Contingency Guidelines is also available at www.covid19.act.gov.au.

Please forward this information to all prescribers or other key stakeholders within your practice or organisation. Should you have any queries, please contact the Pharmaceutical Services Section of the Health Protection Service on 02 5124 9208 or hps@act.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vivien Bevan', is positioned above the printed name.

Vivien Bevan
Chief Pharmacist
Health Protection Service
15 June 2020