



JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Monday 17 August 2020

Electronic prescriptions rolling out to support Melbourne

To support those people most at risk from COVID-19, the rollout of electronic prescriptions across Greater Melbourne will be expanded beyond the current communities of interest. This follows successful testing since May 2020.

Electronic prescribing is being implemented in General Practices and Community Pharmacies across Australia. To date, this has occurred through a managed approach of testing and continuous improvement across a growing number of 'communities of interest'.

Given the current COVID-19 crisis in Melbourne the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia are working together with the Australian Department of Health and the Australian Digital Health Agency to support doctors and pharmacists in the Greater Melbourne area to access this new technology faster. This will support a safer and more convenient supply of medicines for patients.

Previous communications have stated electronic prescriptions should only be written or dispensed as part of the communities of interest trials. This is now being expanded to the Greater Melbourne area. If you have made the preparations outlined below, you can and should commence electronic prescribing in Greater Melbourne, starting with the patient's preferred choice of how they receive their prescriptions and medicines.

With an immediate focus on general practices and community pharmacies in greater metropolitan Melbourne to substantially increase electronic prescription capability over the coming weeks we all need to work together. The following steps will help your pharmacy or general practice get ready.

General practice and pharmacy readiness

Step 1: Software activation - contact your software supplier and ask them to activate your electronic prescribing functionality.

Step 2: Communication between local pharmacies and general practices is critical - this will ensure everyone is ready to write and dispense an electronic prescription (noting some pharmacies may require more time and resources to get their dispensing workflow ready).

Patients may experience a delay in accessing their medicines including having to return to general practice for a paper prescription if this step is not undertaken.

Step 3: Stay informed - attend webinars and education sessions run by the Australian Digital Health Agency, the Pharmacy Guild and the RACGP to learn more about electronic prescribing and how it works.

Practices and pharmacies in other areas of Australia are being advised to prepare for a broader rollout by getting software ready and participating in training opportunities being provided by the Agency, peak bodies and software providers.

Schedule 8 and 4D medicines

All medicines, including Schedule 8 and 4D medicines, can be prescribed and dispensed through an electronic prescription providing patients with a safe and secure way of obtaining medicines remotely. Unlike a request for a Schedule 8 or 4D medicine using a digital image prescription via fax or email, the prescriber is not required to send an original hard copy of the prescription to the pharmacy - the electronic (paperless) prescription is the legal order to prescribe and supply.

Patient Choice

It's important to remember that electronic prescriptions are an alternative to paper. If a patient's preferred local pharmacy is not ready for electronic prescriptions, patients can still choose to get a paper prescription from their doctor.

Resources

For more information about electronic prescribing and electronic prescriptions, see:

- **Department of Health:** www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescribing
- **Australian Digital Health Agency:** www.digitalhealth.gov.au/get-started-with-digital-health/electronic-prescriptions
- **Australian Digital Health Agency electronic prescription eLearning:** <https://training.digitalhealth.gov.au/>
- **Australian Digital Health Agency electronic prescription upcoming webinars:** <https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/news-and-events/events>
- **The RACGP information for GP's and patients:** <https://www.racgp.org.au/electronicprescribing>
- **Pharmaceutical Society of Australia Dedicated Electronic Prescriptions Support Line for pharmacies:** 1300 955 162. Available 0830am to 7.00pm AEST

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