

QUEENSLAND HEALTH POLICY / GUIDELINES

USE OF RETURNED OR UNUSED DISPENSED MEDICINES

POLICY STATEMENT

Pharmaceutical products that have been delivered to a patient and taken away from the custody of Queensland Health or were supplied outside Queensland Health, are deemed to have moved outside the controlled supply chain, and consequently are at risk of having been:

- incorrectly stored, in circumstances that may adversely affect its effectiveness or safety
- contaminated (accidentally or deliberately).

Products in this situation, if brought into the hospital, should not be reused other than for the patient for whom they were prescribed and in whose possession they have been, and then only in accordance with the following guidance.

SCOPE

This policy covers unused medicines returned to Queensland Health that:

- have been dispensed/supplied for patient to use at home (including a nursing home) and are returned to a hospital/clinic by the patient (or their carer)
- medicines dispensed elsewhere that are brought into a hospital/clinic by the patient.

The policy applies to all Queensland Health institutions.

BACKGROUND

It is recognised that Queensland Health staff will have a concern that medicines are expensive and should not be wasted; however the overriding principles are:

- maintenance of quality and safety in the supply of medicines to patients (whether patients of Queensland Health or not)
- compliance with relevant legislation governing the supply and possession of drugs.

In general, the quality of a medicine cannot be guaranteed if it has left the controlled supply chain (typically: manufacturer — wholesaler (Central Pharmacy) – local pharmacy/hospital pharmacy – point of supply to patient).

When this has happened, usually as a result of having been supplied to a patient to take away, there are a range of hazards that cannot be ignored. This may include accidental storage at an inappropriate temperature to deliberate tampering, which may have affected the medicines effectiveness or safety.

Therefore, medicine that has left Queensland Health custody should NOT be administered or re-supplied to another patient even though it may appear to be intact and in-date.

These medicines should be disposed of appropriately. One option is to return them to the supplying pharmacy for appropriate destruction.

USE OF RETURNED MEDICINES

In limited circumstances unused/returned medicine may be used.

- Medicine brought into hospital by a patient on admission, remains their property, unless they relinquish them, and if it is still currently appropriate for the patient's treatment, may be used for **that patient only**, with appropriate safeguards to confirm the identity and quality of the product and that appropriate storage conditions have been followed.
- Unused medicines that have never left Queensland Health custody (eg. dispensed for a patient whose prescription has changed before the medicine has been handed over) may be re-supplied to a different Queensland Health patient provided that:
 - the medicine has sufficient time before expiry to complete the prescribed course of treatment
 - the packaging is not damaged and will provide adequate protection to the medicine
 - any labelling relating to the previous supply process has been completely removed, without removing/obscuring other essential information (drug name, strength, form, expiry date and batch no, warnings)
 - supply is made in accordance with the *Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996*.

If in doubt, contact your hospital pharmacy department for advice from a pharmacist.

EFFECTIVE DATE

1/05/2005

REVIEW CYCLE

This policy will be reviewed after five years unless requested earlier by the Executive Director, Clinical and Statewide Services.

ENQUIRIES TO

The Director, Medicines and Pharmacy Services Unit
Phone 07 3636 9831

ORIGINAL POLICY AUTHORISED BY

Senior Executive Director, Health Services Directorate
28/04/2005

ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATE

(Signed) Mr A F Petrie
Director, Medicines & Pharmacy Services Unit
01/03/2007