

Monitored Medicines – legal obligations

General practitioners, private specialists, and community pharmacists

If you prescribe or dispense monitored medicines in Queensland, some important changes are happening

The new *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019* refers to a list of ‘monitored medicines’ that have a recognised therapeutic use but may also present a high risk of physical, mental and social harms. This includes:

- All schedule 8 medicines (e.g. opioids, alprazolam, nabiximols, dexamphetamine)
- The following schedule 4 medicines:
 - All benzodiazepines
 - All codeine containing products
 - Tramadol
 - Zolpidem
 - Zopiclone
 - Gabapentin
 - Pregabalin
 - Quetiapine

What are my legal obligations?

It is Queensland Health’s (QH) responsibility to regulate access to and encourage the safe use of monitored medicines. To assist health practitioners in prescribing and dispensing monitored medicines, Queensland Health has established:

- a real-time prescription monitoring system, known as **QScript**, and
- a departmental standard, known as the **Monitored Medicines Standard (MMS)**

Checking QScript

QScript is Queensland’s real-time prescription monitoring system, providing easily accessible monitored medicine prescription information at the point of care.

For prescribers and dispensers with QScript compatible prescribing software, QScript will send you notifications when prescribing or dispensing a monitored medicine:

- A red notification indicates the patient has a record in QScript and a high-risk clinical scenario has been identified. Prescribers and dispensers *must check the patient record in QScript* to fulfill their legislative requirements.

- An amber notification indicates a patient record has been found in QScript, but no high-risk clinical scenario has been identified. Prescribers and dispensers *must check the patient record in QScript* to fulfill their legislative requirements.
- A green notification indicates that there is no record of any monitored medicine record. A prescriber or dispenser is not required to *check the patient record in QScript, their legislative obligations are fulfilled*.

For prescribers and dispensers with non QScript compatible prescribing software you *must* access QScript through the health practitioner web portal at <https://hp.qscript.health.qld.gov.au> and search for and review the relevant patient's record to ensure you meet your legislative obligations.

If you propose to give a patient a treatment dose of a monitored medicine, you *must* also check QScript. As you are not prescribing a monitored medicine you will not receive pop-up notification, therefore you will be required to check QScript using the health practitioner web portal.

Access to QScript, via a web browser, is available for tablets and smart phones – <https://hp.qscript.health.qld.gov.au>

The Monitored Medicines Standard

The Monitored Medicines Standard (MMS) is a legal instrument that supports the objectives and administration of the new legislative framework and which outlines the minimum requirements for prescribers and dispensers to ensure the prescribing and dispensing of monitored medicines for patients is clinically justified, safe and appropriate.

General practices and community pharmacies may already have policies and procedures in place that meet some of the departmental standard requirements. These should be regularly checked to ensure they maintain currency with legislative requirements.

When do I have to comply with the MMS?

A General Practitioner and private medical specialist must comply with the MMS if they prescribe a monitored medicine for dispensing or giving a treatment dose to a patient. This includes writing a prescription for dispensing at a community or hospital pharmacy or writing a prescription for another health practitioner to give a 'treatment dose' to a patient e.g. a GP working in a rural primary care facility directing a registered nurse, in writing or orally, to give a patient 3 days' supply of a monitored medicine to take home

A General Practitioner and private medical specialist do not have to comply with the MMS when prescribing for administration e.g. when writing a monitored medicine on a medication chart or in a patient's medical record to be administered immediately.

A community pharmacist must comply with the MMS when dispensing any monitored medicine prescription, regardless of where the prescriber is based e.g. the pharmacist must comply with the MMS if the prescription is written by an interstate medical practitioner, a local GP, or a hospital prescriber. Where there are multiple dispensers involved in dispensing a monitored medicine for a patient, the dispenser who makes the dispensing record must comply with the MMS.

The *Medicines and Poisons Act 2019* specifies penalties that can be imposed if you do not take reasonable steps to check QScript and comply with the MMS, when required. There will be exceptions in some circumstances, including when treating a patient in an emergency.

Where can I access further information?

QScript website – www.health.qld.gov.au/qscript

Medicines and Poisons Act 2019 website - <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/licences/medicines-poisons>.

QScript Learning Portal - www.qscriptlearn.health.qld.gov.au

QScript help topics – <https://help.qscript.health.qld.gov.au>

Technical support for QScript - Email it.qscript@health.qld.gov.au or call 13 S8INFO (13 78 46)