Donation of medicines to developing countries

1. Purpose

This guideline provides recommendations regarding best practice to for hospitals and institutions wishing to contribute available resources, which might otherwise be wasted, to help health care in developing countries or disaster situations.

2. Scope

This Guideline provides information for all Queensland public health system employees (permanent, temporary and casual) and all organisations and individuals acting as its agents (including Visiting Medical Officers and other partners, contractors, consultants and volunteers).

3. Related documents


The Australian Pharmaceutical Advisory Council (APAC) has published Australian guidelines based on those of the previous version of the WHO Guidelines for Drug Donations. Whilst not up to date with the latest references, the guidelines still provide useful examples. These are available through the Public documents section of the Australian Government Department of Health internet site: http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/nmp-pdf-augudddc-cnt.htm

4. Guideline for donation of medicines to developing countries

In general, the World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that cash donations are more valuable and less wasteful of resources than donations in kind.

Requests for medicine donations should be assessed against the following guiding principles:

- The Department of Health may coordinate a statewide response to disaster situations in developing countries.
- Any donations must be consistent with WHO guidelines.
- No medicines that might be utilised for the treatment of eligible patients in public hospitals may be donated.

It is important that any donations are beneficial and do not create an additional problem for the receiving country.

If a decision is made to donate medicines, the arrangements should be assessed and confirmed to:

- be operating on a legal basis (e.g. operate through an accredited organisation and satisfy customs requirements)
be based on proper assessment of needs, as expressed by the proposed recipients (and thus understanding that the addressee will be appropriately qualified for rational distribution)

be limited to drugs in national essential medicines lists for the recipient country, or in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines

include an appropriate method of disposal of collected medicines which are not sent overseas

involve all medicines having a label which includes the generic or international non-proprietary name

involve medicines sent overseas having a useful shelf life

contribute to the continuity, and rational use, of medicines in the recipient country.

Under the National Health Act 1953, it is illegal to take or send overseas, any medications that have been provided as a benefit under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, unless for personal use.

For further information regarding legal status of returns programs contact Medicines Regulation and Quality on 07 3708 5268 or by e-mail at MRQ@health.qld.gov.au

5. Definitions of terms used in the guideline

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<th>Term</th>
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<td>APAC</td>
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6. Document approval details

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7. Version control

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