Guideline for donation of medicines to developing countries

1. Purpose
This Guideline provides recommendations regarding best practice 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 employees, contractors and consultants within the Department of Health divisions and commercialised business units.

3. Guideline for donation of medicines to developing countries
There are three over-riding principles that govern a response to requests for donation of medicines:

1. Normally in a disaster situation Queensland Department of Health will make a corporate response.
2. Any donations must be consistent with World Health Organisation Guidelines
3. 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 taken to participate, after consideration of the three principles outlined above, it should be based on:

1. The proposed scheme should be assessed and confirmed to:
   • be operating on a legal basis (eg. operate through an accredited organisation).
   • 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 drug lists for the recipient country, or in the World Health Organisation (WHO) Model List of Essential Medicines.
   • include an appropriate method of disposal of collected drugs which are not sent overseas.
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- involve all drugs having a label which includes the generic or international non-
proprietary name.
- involve drugs sent overseas having a useful shelf life.
- contribute to the continuity of and rational use of medicines in the recipient country.

2. Participation should not result in redirection of medications which would otherwise have been appropriately used for Queensland Health patients.

3. Sending of medications should be in accordance with WHO guidelines.

4. 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.

5. In general, WHO recommends that cash donations are more valuable and less wasteful of resources than donations in-kind.

4. Reference and suggested reading


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 and Ageing internet site: http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/035470C60EE4E52FCA256F1800468850/$File/augudddc.pdf

Useful site: European consortium towards appropriate drug donations of non-governmental organizations http://www.drugdonations.org/eng/eng_awareness.html

For further information regarding legal status of returns programs contact Medicines Regulation and Quality on 07 3328 9808 or by e-mail at MRQ@health.qld.gov.au

For other information on the topic, contact Medication Services Queensland.

5. Review

This Guideline is due for review on: 01 December 2016

Date of Last Review: 01 December 2013

Supersedes: 2001 guideline
6. Business Area Contact
Medication Services Queensland

7. Definitions of terms used in the policy and supporting documents

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8. Approval and Implementation

Policy Custodian:
Director, Medication Services Queensland

Responsible Executive Team Member:
Implementation is the responsibility of HHSs

Approving Officer:
Director, Medication Services Queensland

Approval date: 01 December 2013
Effective from: 01 December 2013

Version Control

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