

The use of psychotropic medication for people with schizophrenia

1. Background

The *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards*¹ details standards to protect the public from harm and to improve the quality of health service provision. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, (2012) Standard 4 – Medication Safety requires health service organisations to implement systems to reduce the occurrence of medication incidents, and improve the safety and quality of medicine use.

In late September 2015, the Queensland Psychotropic Medication Advisory Committee (QPMAC) confirmed support for the development of a guiding document for the use of psychotropic medications for people with schizophrenia. This document was developed and endorsed by QPMAC members to guide clinicians to a range of contemporary, evidence-based clinical resources.

2. Scope

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to clinical staff on the use of psychotropic medication for people with schizophrenia, within public mental health services in Queensland.

It is recognised internationally that information and decision making tools for quality use of medicines should be readily available to clinicians.

Rather than an independently developed guideline, this document summarises key areas for consideration with related references and links. Although this advice relates primarily to the management of schizophrenia, it may be relevant for other psychotic disorders; however the evidence base may be less well-established for these conditions.

The Queensland Health Mental Health Models of Service recognise that mental health care is much broader than medication treatment and should also include psychological, social, cultural and spiritual elements. These elements play an essential role in recovery-oriented mental health practice, however, this document focuses specifically on medication treatment that may be relevant to the management of schizophrenia.

3. Definition

Schizophrenia is a chronic brain disorder that affects about one per cent of the population. When schizophrenia is active, symptoms can include delusions, hallucinations, trouble with thinking and concentration, and lack of motivation. However, when these symptoms are treated, most people with schizophrenia will greatly improve over time.²

4. Clinical governance for medication safety

The guideline should be used in conjunction with local Hospital and Health Service medication safety/drug and therapeutics governance mechanisms to promote the safe and quality use of medicines in line with the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards.

Hospital and Health Services should have documented clinical review mechanisms for complex treatment issues experienced by individual patients. Review mechanisms should be multidisciplinary and include expert advice from outside the treating team.

In addition, the Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups' national guiding principles^{3,4} should be used for off-label use of medicines to assist and standardise decision-making by health care professionals, local drug and therapeutics committees and consumers in their evaluation, approval and use of off-label medicines. These principles are outlined below:

1. Use high quality evidence to determine appropriateness of off-label medicine use.
2. Involve the patient/carer in shared decision making when recommending the use of an off-label medicine.
3. Consider review by the local drug and therapeutics committee when prescribing an off-label medicine.
4. Ensure appropriate information is available at all steps of the medicines management cycle.
5. Monitor outcomes, effectiveness and adverse events.
6. Consider liability and accountability when using medicines off-label.

5. General clinical practice guidelines for the role and use of medication in the management of schizophrenia

The preferred guideline for use by Queensland Health clinicians is Galletly, et al. (2016) *Clinical practice guidelines for the management of schizophrenia related disorders*.⁵

Note that best practice for psychotic disorders involves a range of non-pharmacological interventions outside the scope of this document.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following Queensland Health policies and guidelines available by searching the Policies and Standards section of www.health.qld.gov.au

- Safe and quality use of clozapine therapy in mental health services (pending approval)⁶.
- Acute behavioural disturbance management (including acute sedation) in Queensland Health Authorised Mental Health Services (adults) (pending approval)⁷.
- Acute behavioural disturbance management (including acute sedation) in Queensland Health Authorised Mental Health Services (children and adolescents) (pending approval)⁸.

6. Supporting consumers and carers with medication related issues

A number of resources have been developed over recent years emphasising choice, information-sharing and participation in the process of psychotropic medication prescribing.

QPMAC recommends:

- Medication and Mental Illness: Perspectives⁹ Mental Health Commission of NSW
- Choice and Medication website <http://www.choiceandmedication.org/queenslandhealth>¹⁰.
- Guideline for the Administration of Electroconvulsive Therapy¹¹.

7. Prescription and administration of psychotropic medications

A range of resources are available to guide prescribers which can be easily accessed via Queensland Health's Clinician Knowledge Network (CKN) website <https://www.ckn.org.au>.

- Therapeutic Guidelines (provides information by clinical indication).
- Australian Medicines Handbook (provides information by individual medication)¹²
Clinicians should be aware of the specific indications and restrictions for use of psychotropic medications in hospital settings which may differ to that of the community
- Formulary notes for the List of Approved Medicines (LAM)¹³. This is the official statewide formulary for medicines approved for use in all Queensland Health Public hospitals and institutions
- Mental health standardised suite of clinical documentation¹⁴
- Mental health metabolic monitoring form¹⁵
- Adult Clozapine Titration Chart User Guide¹⁶
- Community Mental Health Depot Administration Record¹⁷
- Information on indications and restrictions for use in community settings at: <http://www.pbs.gov.au/pbs/home>.

8. Pharmacotherapy in specific population groups and situations

Additional information specific to particular patient groups is also available within dedicated resources freely available online. When using references published outside Australia, be aware that drug doses, licensed indications, and arrangements for government subsidy may vary between countries. Always check the Australian Medicines Handbook and the PBS listings to confirm Australian arrangements.

The following examples are not considered an exhaustive list:

- Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Medicines Guide¹⁸.
- Guidance on the use of Antipsychotics Version 3¹⁹.
- Professional Practice Guideline 7: Guidance for psychotropic medication use in children and adolescents²⁰.

Clinicians may find it useful to supplement these resources with material such as:

- The Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines in Psychiatry²¹
- Psychotropic Drug Directory 2016²².

Particular care is required around medication use in behavioural emergencies in inpatient mental health settings. Refer to the guidelines for acute behavioural disturbance management (including acute sedation) in Queensland Health Authorised Mental Health Services (adults)⁷ and the acute behavioural disturbance management (including acute sedation) in Queensland Health Authorised Mental Health Services (children and adolescents)⁸.

Pharmacists with specialist mental health knowledge and experience are also a significant source of information and advice.

9. Physical health monitoring and review

There has been increasing awareness of the need for vigilance in detecting the onset of physical health problems especially in relation to psychotropic medication. Monitoring for the range of side effects

associated with the use of psychotic medications is the responsibility of all clinicians working with individual consumers in the multidisciplinary team.

QPMAC recommends the following Queensland Health policies and guidelines which are available by searching the Policies and Standards section of www.health.qld.gov.au:

- Mental health standardised suite of clinical documentation¹⁴
- Mental health metabolic monitoring form¹⁵
- How to use the mental health metabolic monitoring form²³
- Guideline for the safe and quality use of clozapine therapy in mental health services 2016²⁴
- Physical health care of mental health consumers – guidelines (Department of Health New South Wales)²⁵.

10. Abbreviations

CKN	Clinician Knowledge Network
DSM 5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5)
LAM	List of approved medicines
QPMAC	Queensland Psychotropic Medication Advisory Committee
RANZCP	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists

11. Tools that may be helpful

- Therapeutic Guidelines (provides information by clinical indication)
- Australian Medicines Handbook Pty Ltd, 2016. Available at: <https://amhonline.amh.net.au> (provides information by individual medication)
- Formulary notes for the List of Approved Medicines. Available at: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/publications/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/medicines/lam.pdf>
- Mental Health metabolic monitoring form
- How to use the mental health metabolic monitoring form
- Guideline for the safe and quality use of clozapine therapy in mental health services
- Adult Clozapine Titration Chart User Guide. Available at: <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/dcho/docs/hpd/mrq/sw216-clozapine-titration-chart.pdf>.
- Physical Health Care of Mental Health Consumers – Guidelines (Department of Health New South Wales)
- Community Mental Health Depot Administration Record. Available at: <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/dcho/docs/hpd/mrq/sw017-cmhs-dept-record.pdf>
- Information on indications and restrictions for use in community settings at: <http://www.pbs.gov.au/pbs/home>.

12. References

- ¹ Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, 2012. *National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards* [online]. Sydney: Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Available at: <http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/NSQHS-Standards-Sept-2012.pdf> [Accessed 6 May 2016].

- ² American Psychiatric Association, 2016. *What is Schizophrenia?* Available at: <http://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/schizophrenia> [Accessed 6 May 2016].
- ³ The Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups, 2012. *Smart decisions: Development of national guiding principles for off-label use of medicines* [online]. Available at: <http://www.catag.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/SHPA-off-label-poster-2013-final.pdf> [Accessed 6 May 2016].
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- ⁵ Galletly, C., Castle, D., Dark, F., Humberstone, V., Jablensky, A., Killackey, E., Kulkarni, J., McGorry, P., Niessen, O. and Tran, N., 2016. Clinical practice guidelines for the management of schizophrenia and related disorders. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol.50 (5), pp.410-472.
- ⁶ Queensland Health, 2016. *Safe and quality use of clozapine therapy in mental health services*. Consultation draft.
- ⁷ Queensland Health, 2016. *Acute behavioural disturbance management (including acute sedation) in Queensland Health Authorised Mental Health Services (adults)*. Consultation draft.
- ⁸ Queensland Health, 2016. *Acute behavioural disturbance management (including acute sedation) in Queensland Health Authorised Mental Health Services (children and adolescents)*. Consultation draft.
- ⁹ Mental Health Commission of NSW, 2015. *Medication and Mental Illness: Perspectives*. Sydney: Mental Health Commission of NSW.
- ¹⁰ Mistura Enterprise Limited, 2016. *Choice and Medication* [website] Available at: <http://www.choiceandmedication.org/queenslandhealth> [Accessed 6 May 2016].
- ¹¹ Queensland Health, 2016. *Guideline for the Administration of Electroconvulsive Therapy*. Consultation draft.
- ¹² Australian Medicines Handbook Pty Ltd, 2016. AMH [website]. Available at: <https://amhonline.amh.net.au> [Accessed 6 May 2016].
- ¹³ Queensland Health, 2016. *Formulary notes for the List of Approved Medicines* [online]. Available at: <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/publications/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/medicines/lam.pdf>.
- ¹⁴ Queensland Health, 2016. *Standardised suite of clinical documentation*.
- ¹⁵ Queensland Health, 2016. *Mental health metabolic monitoring form*.
- ¹⁶ Queensland Health, 2011. *Adult Clozapine Titration Chart User Guide*. [online]. Available at: <http://qheps.health.qld.gov.au/dcho/docs/hpd/mrq/sw216-clozapine-titration-chart.pdf>. [Accessed 6 May 2016].
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- ¹⁸ Royal Women's Hospital Victoria, 2016. *Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Medicines Guide*. [online] Available at: <https://thewomenspbmg.org.au/> [Accessed 5 May 2016].
- ¹⁹ Sussex Partnership, National Health Service, 2015. *Guidance on the use of Antipsychotics Version 3*. [online] Available at: http://www.sussexpartnership.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/documents/antipsychotic_guidelines_version_3_-_oct_15_5.pdf [Accessed 6 May 2016].

- ²⁰ Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, 2015. *Professional Practice Guideline 7: Guidance for psychotropic medication use in children and adolescents*. [online] Available at: https://www.ranzcp.org/Files/Resources/College_Statements/Practice_Guidelines/pg7-pdf.aspx [Accessed 6 May 2016].
- ²¹ Taylor, D., Paton, C. and Kapur, S. 2015. *The Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines in Psychiatry*. 12th Revised edition. New York: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- ²² Bazire, S. 2016. *Psychotropic Drug Directory 2016*. London: Lloyd-Reinhold Publications. Available for purchase at: <http://www.psychotropicdrugdirectory.com/pdd-info.html> [Accessed 6 May 2016].
- ²³ Queensland Health, 2016. *How to use the mental health metabolic monitoring form*.
- ²⁴ Queensland Health, 2016. *Guideline for the safe and quality use of clozapine therapy in mental health services*. Consultation draft.
- ²⁵ Department of Health, 2009. *Physical Health Care of Mental Health Consumers – Guidelines*. Sydney: Department of Health New South Wales.

13. Approval and implementation

Consultation:

- Queensland Psychotropic Medication Advisory Committee (QPMAC)
- Queensland Health Mental Health Clinical Clusters
- Medicines Regulation and Quality, Chief Medical Officer and Healthcare Regulation Branch, Prevention Division, Department of Health
- Regulatory Instruments Unit, Systems Policy and Performance Division.

Approval:

- Chief Psychiatrist, Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch, Clinical Excellence Division, Department of Health

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Policy Custodian:

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14. Version control

Version	Date	Prepared by	Comments / reason for update
1	27/07/2016	Clinical Governance Team	First publication