

Fact sheet: Prescribing and Dispensing Hydroxychloroquine Direction

This fact sheet informs pharmacists about amended prescribing and dispensing requirements for hydroxychloroquine.

Background

To ensure the continued availability of hydroxychloroquine for therapeutic treatment and clinical trials, the Commonwealth Department of Health has published an amendment to the Poisons Standard - the [Poisons Standard Amendment \(Hydroxychloroquine\) Instrument 2020](#).

To give effect to the Commonwealth decision in Queensland, a Public Health Direction - [Prescribing and Dispensing of Hydroxychloroquine Direction](#) ('the Direction') - has been made pursuant to the powers under section 362B of the *Public Health Act 2005 (QLD)*. The Direction applies from 7 April 2020 until the end of the declared public health emergency, unless otherwise revoked or replaced.

Prescribing

Initiating treatment

Under the Direction, only the following medical or dental practitioners are authorised to make a prescription initiating treatment with hydroxychloroquine:

1. A medical practitioner who holds specialist registration in the specialty area of:
 - Dermatology
 - Intensive care medicine
 - Paediatrics and child health
 - Physician
 - Emergency medicine
2. A medical practitioner who is training to prepare for specialist registration in one of the above-mentioned specialty areas and who is working under the supervision of medical practitioner who holds the requisite specialist registration.
3. A dentist who holds specialist registration in oral medicine.

Continuing treatment

Prescribers not listed above may, within the scope of their usual practice, prescribe hydroxychloroquine for the treatment of a chronic condition only if the treatment was **initiated** by a medical practitioner or dentist who is authorised to make a prescription initiating treatment, as above. Note. Initiated includes prescribing or providing advice to another prescriber to prescribe.



Dispensing or supplying hydroxychloroquine

It is the responsibility of pharmacists to ensure that they are complying with the requirements of the Direction and the Health (Drugs and Poisons) Regulation 1996 when dispensing or supplying hydroxychloroquine. Prior to dispensing or supplying hydroxychloroquine on a prescription that was written while the Direction is in effect, a pharmacist must:

- ensure that a prescription for hydroxychloroquine treatment is made by a prescriber who is authorised to prescribe the medicine under the Direction; or
- take reasonable steps to confirm that a person for whom hydroxychloroquine has been prescribed has a therapeutic need for continuing treatment of a chronic condition; or
- if supplying for an approved clinical trial, ensure that supply is in accordance with the research protocol for the trial.

Confirming that a prescription has been written by an authorised prescriber

It may be evident from the prescription that the prescriber holds specialist registration in one of the listed specialty areas, for example, because the prescriber's qualifications are included on the prescription. Otherwise pharmacists can check the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) Register of Practitioners to determine the prescriber's registration status. If a prescription has been made by a prescriber who does not hold registration in one of the listed specialty areas, pharmacists may need to contact the prescriber to confirm that treatment was initiated by an authorised prescriber.

Therapeutic Need

The requirement to take reasonable steps to ensure a patient's ongoing therapeutic need could be satisfied by a pharmacist checking that a patient has previously been dispensed hydroxychloroquine for a chronic health condition. If the pharmacist does not know the patient's history they may, with the patient's permission, contact another pharmacy where records are held or check the patient's MyHealth Record, and make a record of the steps that were taken. If a dispensing history for hydroxychloroquine cannot be determined, the pharmacist should contact the prescriber to confirm that a prescription is for ongoing treatment of a chronic condition.

Clinical trials

Prior to supplying hydroxychloroquine for a clinical trial, a pharmacist must ensure that the trial has the necessary approvals. Approval information may be available at [Clinical Trial Registries](#).

For further information please contact:

Healthcare Approvals and Regulation Unit

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