



NSW  
Therapeutic  
Advisory  
Group Inc.

Advancing  
quality use  
of medicines  
in NSW

## **Group Discussion: Weekend supply of TB medicines for active treatment**

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018

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### **Question:**

NSW TAG received an enquiry from a member about how hospitals dispense medicines for active treatment of tuberculosis (TB) on weekends (hence unobserved therapy). They are finding this particularly challenging in Non English Speaking Background (NESB) patients.

NSW TAG and TAGNet members were asked to provide information about how this is managed at their hospital/district (and in NESB patients)?

### **Responses:**

Seven responses were received from: Concord, John Hunter Hospital (JHH), Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD), Liverpool Hospital, Manly Hospital, Murrumbidgee (MLHD) and Port Macquarie & Kempsey Hospitals.

#### Concord

Our TB nurse says there is no hospital in NSW that has funding for a weekend TB service. Apparently they give patients their medicines on Friday in 2 envelopes – one for Saturday and one for Sunday. The TB nurse believes there has never been any issues, as they count out the tablets with the patients.

#### John Hunter Hospital (JHH)

From pharmacy: Our observed doses are co-ordinated by the TB nurses - we dispense to them usually on a monthly basis, they visit to dose and observe patients. My understanding is that they can do "observed" doses via telehealth too.

From TB nurses: We have dosette boxes we fill on the Friday prior to the weekend and patient takes them themselves. After 2 months they are usually on 3x week.

We usually have patients well stocked in advance and they do not require dispensing as we normally control supply on a month to month basis. With our active cases we do supervised visits at home or through scopia and again we control dispensing. Our MAC and Latent Tb patients usually ring when they are about to run out and we will have them pick up a month supply from pharmacy before the weekend.

#### ISLHD

On weekends and Public Holidays the client will self-medicate with a bottle that will contain their treatment regimen specific for that day.

Other: We don't have the issue about distribution of TB medications after hours as we see the clients before discharge and organise the medications before they leave. If required, all new active tuberculosis clients will receive 3 days emergency medication supply.

#### Liverpool

We have lots of these situations at Liverpool every weekend and every public holiday when the clinic is not open. Most of our patients are of NESB. We dispense the medications as normal

containing the exact number of tablets/capsules of each drug they need for 2 days. In general they are supervised at least for 1 week prior and they are shown by the clinic staff how to count and what to do, even though they can't speak English. Our Chest Clinic utilises interpreters for explaining the treatment to start with. Patients are asked to bring their bottles back as well. (Of course the bottles can be empty even if not taken correctly). Years ago we used to pack all tablets and capsules due on Saturday into one bottle and all due on Sunday into a second bottle. This became too hard with the numbers increasing and also patients on non-standard drugs due to multi-drug resistance. So we stopped that practice probably close to 10 years ago.

#### MLHD

We would generally not dispense medicines to active TB patients on weekends unless the client is being discharged from a hospital on a Saturday or Sunday (advice from TB coordinator is this would be 'highly unusual'). NB: Wagga Hospital Pharmacy now opens on Saturday and Sunday which would enable dispensing by pharmacists during those hours if needed. However, the TB coordinator advises to minimise the need for any weekend dispensing, weekend discharges would be planned in advance including organisation of the medicines to the client or supervising staff with required education, documentation etc.

The TB co-ordinator has also advised that Directly Observed Therapy (DOT) and Video Directly Observed Therapy (VDOT) occurs over the weekend in MLHD by Community Health staff.

#### Manly Hospital

For active TB treatment patients on a daily dose regimen, the non-observed doses of TB medications are dispensed all together in a single 'pre-pack' bottle labelled with the date the dose is to be taken.

Patients are observed directly by the TB nurse on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays and then provided with the 'pre-pack' of individually dated bottles to dose themselves on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Patient numbers vary from between 4 to 10 patients a month.

It was reported by our chest clinic nurse that Royal North Shore Hospital have access to blister packs for patients requiring TB medicines on the weekend.

#### Port Macquarie & Kempsey

We dispense one month supply to the TB nurse who comes and gets it; I would assume that they do home visits on weekends, but we haven't got very many patients.

*Responses received as at 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018*

*Please note that all information and policies are only current at the time the response is sent and individual hospitals should be contacted to ascertain current policies and practices. The responses received are only representative of the hospitals participating in the discussion at the time and do not necessarily indicate a complete picture of current practices. Information sharing occurs on the understanding that due acknowledgement will be given to the original source and that the information will not be quoted or used out of the context of the discussion. Permission should be sought from the original source before any policy, protocol or guideline is used or applied in another setting.*