

Supporting resources for managing the Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) NSW

Errors, incidents, and lack of proprietary oversight relating to the Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) pose significant risk to patient and public safety. The Pharmacy Council of NSW and pharmacy representative organisations aim to raise awareness of the responsibilities of pharmacists offering this service and provide guidance on managing this program to ensure compliance with legislation.

The accompanying **Opioid Treatment Program Flow Chart Protocol** is designed to remind all pharmacists that:

1. Greater care and consideration needs to be applied to reduce the risk of harm for patients and the public
2. Adhering to legislation and following robust procedures can reduce the number of incidents relating to regulatory action for pharmacists and prescribers

Proprietor Oversight:

Proprietorial oversight and engagement by all owners is expected by the NSW regulatory agencies. Often incidents and regulatory notifications could have been prevented through better procedures and protocols. Proprietors must ensure they have adequate oversight of their business, including protocols in place to manage the OTP. The following are some suggestions for proprietors and management.

- Develop robust procedures to ensure staff consistently offer OTP services in a safe and professional manner.
- Ensure pharmacists are reminded of their professional obligations as autonomous practitioners.
- Regularly audit OTP transactions for compliance with legislation.
 - Consider random audits on OTP invoices from wholesalers to ensure stock is accounted for, received, and recorded.
 - Consider random audits on OTP prescriptions and patient files to ensure compliance with legislation.
 - Consider random audits on OTP transactions, including the subsidiary drug registers if used. Check for legibility, clear identification of the supplying pharmacist, adherence to missed dose protocols and other OTP procedures.
- Maintain oversight of handling and storage of OTP medications.
- Maintain oversight of patient reviews and knowledge of difficult clients.
- Develop and implement a protocol for storing cancelled OTP prescriptions and documentation in compliance with local legislation. It should be readily accessible if requested by regulators.
- Ensure regular staff training is provided to ensure compliance with policies and procedures and ensure any locum pharmacists are familiar with the program and the recording system used by the pharmacy.
- Regularly review current opioid therapeutic guidelines and the pharmacy's protocols for supplying these medicines.
- Regularly communicate with prescribers regarding compliance with the legislation when prescribing and supplying OTP medicines. This is especially important for pharmacies working closely with medical centres.
- Ensure all incidents and communications with the prescriber are recorded.

Opioid Therapy Program Incentive Scheme:

From the beginning of 2022, participating pharmacies can claim an incentive of \$50 + GST per hour (capped at 10 hours for each 6 monthly reporting period and paid twice a year) for OTP related educational or quality improvement activities. Examples include:

- OTP related CPD courses, workshops, webinars
- Reviewing, reading OTP Guidelines and protocols
- Reviewing/updating pharmacy OTP procedures and policies

- Undertaking OTP Self Audits

For further information about the Pharmacy Incentive Scheme, please contact the Pharmacy Guild of Australia on 02 9467 7100 or email healthservices@nsw.guild.org.au.

Resources:

The following links to resources are not exhaustive and should not be considered definitive. Pharmacists are encouraged to incorporate self-directed education into their learning plan on the indications and supply of these medicines and to take advantage of the wealth of information available on this topic.

NSW Health

[SafeScript NSW](#)

[SafeScript Clinical Advice Line](#) ph:1800 434 155 - available 24/7

[NSW OTP Community Pharmacy Dosing Point Protocol](#)

[NSW Clinical Guidelines: Treatment of Opioid Dependence 2018](#)

[Pharmacy Dispensing ePrescriptions for the Opioid Treatment Program](#)

NSW Legislation

[Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008](#)

[Pharmacy Dispensing ePrescriptions for the OTP](#)

Pharmacy Council News

[OTP Pitfalls and Consequences](#)

Pharmacy Guild of Australia

[OTP Resource Manual](#) (Pharmacy/Patient Agreement pg 24)

[Self-Audit for Community Providing OTP Service](#)

NPS Links

[Podcast 36: Approaching difficult conversations with patients about opioid use](#)

[Opioids and antidepressants: which combinations to avoid](#)

This resource has been prepared for NSW pharmacists by the Pharmacy Council of NSW, PDL, Pharmacy Guild of Australia (NSW), PSA (NSW) and SHPA