

# Advice for pharmacists supplying medicines to patients affected by Victorian Bushfires

9 January 2020

A public health emergency order has been issued to enable the supply of prescription medicines from a community pharmacy in emergencies in a bushfire affected area in Victoria. It is effective until midnight 1 April 2020.

The usual arrangements for emergency 3 days' supply or supply of the smallest commercially available pack, and supply under the continued dispensing initiative remain in place in all areas of Victoria.

Schedule 8 medication may NOT be supplied under the public health emergency order.

The usual arrangements for the supply of Schedule 8 medication remain. A pharmacist may dispense Schedule 8 medication in accordance with a verbal instruction from the prescriber in an emergency. The pharmacist can confirm the patient's current medication details with the prescriber, or a prescriber may direct a pharmacist to supply a medicine to a patient in an emergency, by providing a telephone order. The prescriber must forward a paper prescription to the pharmacy as soon as practicable, confirming the instruction.

Pharmacists and prescribers are reminded to use SafeScript, Victoria's real-time prescription monitoring system, to enable safer supply of high-risk medicines.

## **Public health emergency order for emergency supply without a prescription in bushfire affected areas in place until midnight 1 April 2020**

A patient can receive a supply of Schedule 4 medication without a prescription, where the pharmacist is satisfied there is immediate need. The medicine must have been previously prescribed, be for continuation of current essential treatment and it is impracticable to obtain a prescription.

The quantity to be supplied is no more than:

- For substances that are on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the standard Pharmaceutical Benefits maximum quantity, or
- For substances that are not on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, the quantity that is contained in the smallest standard pack in which the substance is generally available.

The pharmacist must record: (a) name and address of the patient; (b) name, form, strength and quantity of the medicine; (c) directions for use of the substance as determined by the pharmacist; (d) name and address of the authorised practitioner who last prescribed that substance; (e) date of supply; (f) name of the pharmacist by whom the substance was supplied; and (g) that the medication was supplied under the public health emergency order. The medicine must be labelled as for a dispensed medicine.

Schedule 8 medication may NOT be supplied under the public health emergency order.

## **Supplying medicines under the usual 3 day emergency supply provision without a prescription**

In an emergency where a pharmacist considers that the supply of a Schedule 4 medicine is necessary to ensure continuity of treatment a pharmacist may supply 3 days' supply or, if it is not practical to supply a quantity required for 3 days, the smallest commercially available pack. Before doing so, a pharmacist must be satisfied that there is an immediate need for the medicine and that it is impracticable for the patient to obtain a prescription in time to

meet that need. The pharmacist must also be satisfied that the patient has previously been prescribed the medicine and ensure that the patient, or person caring for the patient, is aware of the appropriate dose of the medicine.

Note: a pharmacist must not supply a Schedule 4 medicine that would continue treatment that has already been continued by supplying under this exception.

### **Supplying medicines on emergency verbal directions of an authorised prescriber**

A pharmacist may dispense medications in accordance with a verbal instruction from the prescriber in an emergency. This includes both Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medications.

### **Continued dispensing of selected PBS medicines**

When a pharmacist considers that a supply of a Schedule 4 is necessary to ensure continuity of treatment a pharmacist may supply Schedule 4 medicine listed in the National Health (Continued Dispensing) Determination 2012 and that have been approved by the Minister without a prescription if the pharmacist has not previously supplied that medicine to the patient in accordance with this provision during the previous 12 months. The medicines include certain oral contraceptives and statins.

### **Opioid replacement therapy/pharmacotherapy program**

If a patient is being treated with methadone or buprenorphine for opioid replacement therapy and is unable to access their designated pharmacy, contact DirectLine on 1800 888 236 to locate a pharmacotherapy approved pharmacy.

### **Emergency relocation of a pharmacy in Victoria**

Pharmacists seeking to temporarily relocate their pharmacy due to damage from the bushfires should contact the Victorian Pharmacy Authority on 03 9653 1700.

### **Pharmacist supply of Schedule 3 medicines for First Aid kits**

Before supplying a Schedule 3 medicine a pharmacist must take all reasonable steps to ensure that a therapeutic need exists and must supply to a person under their care. This requirement does not preclude supply to a person for inclusion in that persons first aid kit. Common examples of Schedule 3 medicines for inclusion in a first aid kit include EpiPen®, salbutamol and terbutaline.

Note: Health practitioners (including pharmacists) are not authorised to sell or supply Schedule 3 medicines by wholesale unless specifically authorised to do so. The definition of 'wholesale' includes sale or supply for the purposes of resale or supply to another person. A pharmacist must not supply Schedule 3 medicines by for inclusion in first aid kits where it is intended that the first aid kits are on sold. If a customer seeks a larger than usual quantity of Schedule 3 medicines for a first aid kit pharmacists should apply their professional judgement in determining whether a 'larger than reasonable quantity' is being requested.

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