

SA Palliative Care Community Pharmacy Update

A joint initiative of South Australian Palliative Care Services

The community pharmacy network response to COVID has been outstanding. Continuing to diligently serve the community despite risk of infection, as well as uncomfortable behaviours like threats of physical violence. The public and health services applaud your efforts in continuing to care for patients and bolstering the vaccination program. Thankyou!

Challenges

People living with serious illness are at high risk for COVID-19. The pandemic has made it more important than ever to discuss health care plans and prioritize what matters to the patient. This helps to avoid futile or unwanted interventions and optimize resources. Preferably conversations will involve the family and/or designated carers. Pharmacists are accessible and can support families in [these discussions \(218kb pdf\)](#).

While for most, symptoms will be mild, others including the vulnerable may experience breathlessness and cough, excessive respiratory secretions, anxiety and delirium.

Palliative services support patients and their GP's in the case the patient is not for ICU or hospital care.

Clinical Guidelines

SA Health have provisional guidelines for the [pharmacologic management of end-of-life care outside ICU \(160kb pdf\)](#).

Shortage of injectable medicines and pumps?

Whilst we did not experience a shortage of critical medicines in 2020, nevertheless planning for death with shortages of midazolam or other injectables were made. Likewise concern of insufficient continuous subcutaneous pumps (e.g. Niki T34 pumps) meant services have looked at other disposable pumps, as well as planning for

administering medicines via alternative routes. Considering the pharmacokinetic properties of medicines helps to guide administration e.g. rectal administration of opioids, intra-nasal dosing of midazolam.

Telehealth

Similarly to Accredited Pharmacists, palliative care pharmacists also transitioned to delivering comprehensive medication reviews via telehealth. Albeit not including a thorough home medication management environment check, we have been able to continue providing face to face care.

What can community pharmacy do to help a 'good' death?

Continue to support those dying in your community by keeping the [core medicines \(218kb pdf\)](#) on your shelf;

- Clonazepam 1mg/mL inj
- Morphine 10mg/mL inj
- Haloperidol 5mg/mL inj
- Metoclopramide 10mg/2mL inj
- Hyoscine butylbromide 20mg/mL inj

(and midazolam 5mg/mL inj in some cases)

Thankyou for your continued support in 2021.

We welcome questions or requests for content you would like to see in 2022. Feel free to email the contacts below.

Wishing you all a safe and happy Christmas

For more information

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This update is intended to provide practical up to date and factual information relating to pharmacy and medicines management in the setting of Palliative Care and is based on critical review of available evidence. Individual patient circumstances must be considered when applying this information. Please feel free to distribute this update further to interested colleagues.