

SMART PROCESSES: Development of National Guiding Principles for Drug and Therapeutics Committees

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Aim

The Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG), a collaboration of representatives from state and territory therapeutic advisory groups or equivalents, aimed to investigate current Drug and Therapeutics committees (DTC) activities in order to develop national guiding principles.

Methods

- National survey of current scope of activities
 - An online survey (SurveyMonkey ®) was distributed by state-based Therapeutic Advisory Groups (TAG)/Advisory committees to DTCs. Ethics approval was obtained from Sydney University HREC.
 - Qualitative interview expanded on comments from the survey.
- CATAG working party was formed to develop CATAG National Guiding Principles. This was reviewed and advised on by a representative Expert Advisory Group (EAG).
- Consultation with CATAG members and external organisations with a responsibility for the safe and judicious use of medicines to finalise the Guiding Principles.

Results

87 respondents from 149 surveys representing 84 (54%) DTCs nationally.

Table 1: DTC organisation and function

Organisation (n=87)	Terms of reference	100%
	Place in organisational chart	71%
Function (n=78)	Medication safety	82%
	Formulary management	76%
	Implementation of policies	76%
Guide to activity (n=86)	NSQHS - Standard Four	79%

Table 2: DTC structure

DTC reports to (n=86)	Safety & Quality /Risk /Medication Safety	43%
	Clinical Governance/Advisory/Reference Committee	41%
Membership (n=82)	Multidisciplinary	100%
	Consumer/patient representation	7%
Subcommittees (n=62)	Medication safety	55%
	Antimicrobial	53%

Table 3: DTC operation – standard policies

	n = 63
Policy for review of medicines for addition to the formulary	57%
Policy for review of medicines for deletion from the formulary	13%

- Effectiveness:** 26% of respondents’ DTCs measure their own effectiveness.
- Communication:** DTC decisions are communicated via email (75%), minutes (58%),intranet (52%) and printed material (37%).
- Resources:** 52% of respondents indicated their DTC has no specific resourcing.

Guiding Principles

SCOPE and FUNCTIONS

- The medicines management system of each health service organisation should be under the governance of a DTC either within a hospital, health district/network or state/territory.
- Each DTC should be included in the formal medicines governance framework for the hospital, local health district/network or state/territory and have documented Terms of Reference.
- The DTC should consider their local environment when defining their functions.

FORM

- DTCs should have formalised reporting structures to the organisation’s executive or clinical governance lead.
- Membership of the DTC should be multidisciplinary, with an appropriate range of expertise and skills to reflect the functions of the DTC.
- DTCs may establish sub-committees to manage specific tasks.

OPERATION and PROCESSES

- Standardised procedures for decision-making regarding formulary management need to be defined and applied.
- Standardised procedures for decision-making regarding individual patient requests need to be defined and applied.
- Standardised processes and documentation should be implemented by the DTC.
- DTCs should be both proactive and responsive to issues arising including the development of an annual work plan.
- The DTC should undertake risk assessments within the health service organisation with respect to medicines use and recommend strategies to mitigate that risk.
- DTCs should identify and prioritise a systems improvement plan and assign responsibilities and timeframes for completion.
- DTCs should have monitoring systems in place in order to evaluate their own effectiveness.

COMMUNICATION

- DTCs should develop a communication strategy that ensures timely, effective and appropriate information for the intended audience.
- DTCs should promote the safe and quality use of medicines throughout the medicines management cycle by engaging with internal and external stakeholders.

RESOURCES

- DTCs should be adequately resourced to undertake their functions and responsibilities by the hospital, local health district/network or state/territory that they service.

Conclusion

DTCs have a diverse range of roles, responsibilities and structures. These National Guiding Principles will assist committees to meet the NSQHS Standards, support DTCs in achieving effective medicines management governance and promote national consistency.

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