The Use of the National Inpatient Medication Chart Policy

SDMS Id Number: Policy ID (as assigned by Corporate Document and Information Services)
Effective From: June 2014
Replaces Doc. No: Policy for the use of the National Inpatient Medication Chart in Tasmanian Public Hospitals P2010/0768-001
Custodian and Review Responsibility: SPP – Medication Strategy and Reform
Contact: Director Medication Strategy and Reform
Applies to: THO-North, THO-South, THO-North West
Policy Type: DHHS Wide Policy
Review Date: April 2017
Keywords: NIMC, medication chart, prescribing, ancillary chart, medicines
Routine Disclosure: Yes

Approval

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Revision History

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This Policy may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is mandatory for the Department of Health and Human Services. Please Destroy Printed Copies. The electronic version of this Policy is the approved and current version and is located on the Department of Health and Human Services’ Strategic Document Management System. Any printed version is uncontrolled and therefore not current.
Purpose

- The National Inpatient Medication Chart (NIMC) must be used to prescribe medications for inpatients of Tasmanian public hospitals, except where an approved ancillary chart exists. Use of the NIMC is also strongly recommended in all other inpatient facilities.

- The medication chart is a communication tool which conveys a prescriber’s decision to treat a patient to all staff involved in medication management. Medication management includes the prescribing, dispensing, distribution, supply and administration of medications. The medication chart is an official order from which medications for inpatient use are dispensed.

- Use of the National Inpatient Medication Chart (NIMC) is a strategy aimed at reducing medication errors. The NIMC is an evidence based tool designed to standardise the processes and documentation of medication ordering. It promotes behaviours which improve the safe and quality use of medicines within Australian hospitals.

- The DHHS recognises the importance and benefits of national consistency, and adopted the NIMC in Tasmanian public hospitals in 2007.

- For the NIMC to be effective in reducing medication errors, it is essential that all staff members who are involved in medication management are aware of the safety features of this chart.

Mandatory Requirements

- This is a statewide policy and must not be re-interpreted so that subordinate policies exist. Should discreet operational differences exist, these should be expressed in the form of an operating procedure or protocol.

- **Failure to comply with this policy**, without providing a good reason for doing so, may lead to disciplinary action.

- The National Inpatient Medication Chart (NIMC) must be used to prescribe medications for inpatients of Tasmanian public hospitals, except where an approved ancillary chart exists. The National Inpatient Medication Chart (NIMC) refers to:
  - NIMC for acute care
  - NIMC long-stay version for acute care
  - NIMC paediatric version
  - NIMC long-stay paediatric version
  - NIMC four A4 page version

  An approved ancillary chart is any chart used for prescribing medications or fluids for a patient that has been approved through the appropriate Committee or pathway.

Principles

- The NIMC must be used to prescribe medications for patients of Tasmanian public inpatient facilities (sites), unless there is an approved ancillary chart for that specific purpose.
• All sites must allow for the introduction of an electronic medication management (eMM) system where appropriate.

• All members of the medication team (doctors, nurses, pharmacists and others) must take responsibility for the correct use of the NIMC as described in the current version of the ‘National Inpatient Medication Chart User Guide’ and the ‘National Inpatient Medication Chart Four A4 page version User advice.’

• In addition to the directions for use of the NIMC as outlined in the 'NIMC User Guide', the ‘Allergy/ADR’ field of the NIMC should be used to report any significant health condition that could cause a potentially serious drug-disease interaction.

• Only nationally approved terminology, abbreviations and symbols are to be used on NIMC. These are detailed in the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare's (ACSQHC) ‘Recommendations for Terminology, Abbreviations and Symbols used in the Prescribing and Administration of Medicines’

• All staff involved in medication management have a responsibility to ensure that patient details recorded on the NIMC are accurate and complete (including the patient identification, ward and treating team, allergies and adverse drug reactions).

• The medication chart is the official record of medications administered to the patient. Any member of staff who administers or supervises self administration of a medication must record that the medication has been administered by writing their initials and the time of administration in the appropriate administration box. All non-medical staff that record information on the NIMC must identify themselves by recording their initials, name and designation on the appropriate page of the NIMC.

• Version control is managed by the Medication Strategy and Reform unit. To remain nationally consistent the NIMC must not be altered unless there is consultation with and agreement by Medication Strategy and Reform.

Roles and Responsibilities/Delegations

• Individual sites, with support from Medication Strategy and Reform, are responsible for implementing this policy within their site.

• Individual sites are responsible for procurement of the NIMC.

• Individual sites are responsible for providing training on the appropriate use of the NIMC.

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<th>Secretary DHHS or delegate</th>
<th>Ensure that the policy is implemented across DHHS facilities.</th>
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| DHHS Departmental Unit (Medication Strategy & Reform) | Create, review and audit the policy in collaboration with clinical staff.  
Coordinate the ACSQHC national NIMC audit. |
| Tasmanian Health Organisation | Ensure that the policy is implemented and supported across their area of responsibility. |

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| Medical, Nursing and Pharmacy Managers | Ensure that the policy is disseminated to applicable staff.  
Provide resources to implement the policy.  
Provide a formal training process for users of the NIMC.  
Provide resources to participate in the ACSQHC national NIMC audit.  
Identify and address with individual users, any unsafe practices and non-compliance in relation to the use of the NIMC. |
|---|---|
| Medical, Nursing and Pharmacy Staff | Utilise the NIMC as described in this policy and applicable NIMC user guides.  
Participate in education on the appropriate use of the NIMC.  
Participate in the ACSQHC national NIMC audit when required. |

**Risk Implications**

- Standardisation is a major initiative to improve the safe use of medications. This was recognised by the Australian Health Ministers in 2004, who directed that a common medication chart be used in all Australian public hospitals by June 2006. The NIMC is the Australian standardised medication chart intended for this purpose. It has been shown to reduce medication errors and improve patient safety through standardising the prescribing of medications for Australian public hospital inpatients\(^1\). In particular, the chart produces a 21% relative reduction in prescribing errors and a 57% relative reduction in the rate of incomplete previous adverse drug reactions\(^1\).

- The expected outcomes of compliance with this policy include:
  - No incidents of a medication chart other than the current version of the NIMC or an approved ancillary chart being used to prescribe or record administration of a medication within a Tasmanian public hospital.
  - Safe prescribing and administration of medications to inpatients of the Tasmanian public hospitals through the appropriate use of the NIMC as detailed in the National Inpatient Medication Chart User Guide.
  - The NIMC forming an accurate record of medications prescribed and administered to inpatients.
  - Education on the use of the NIMC provided to all members of staff who require it.
  - Results from audits on the correct use of the NIMC within Tasmanian public hospitals that are consistent with or superior to the national benchmark.
Training

- All staff involved in medication management must be offered education on the appropriate use of the NIMC. It is mandatory that all staff involved in prescribing and administering medications complete the National Prescribing Service (NPS) NIMC Online Training Course, or an approved alternative training course.

Audit

- This policy will be included in the work program of the DHHS Internal Audit function. This work program is approved by the Audit and Risk Committee and will assess underlying systems and procedures for compliance with the requirements of this policy. The overall focus of this assessment will be one of continuous improvement to DHHS activities.

- Under the auspices of the ACSQHC, Medication Strategy and Reform will coordinate Tasmanian participation in the national NIMC audit. Results of the audit will be reported back to hospital Medication Management and Quality Use of Medicines Committees.

- Individual sites are responsible for implementing change to address any issues identified by the audit.

- Individual sites can conduct audits, including part audits, in addition to those coordinated by Medication Strategy and Reform.

Attachments

2. National terminology, abbreviations and symbols to be used in the prescribing and administering of medicines in Australian hospitals

Related Documents/Useful Resources

2. NIMC for acute care
3. NIMC long-stay version for acute care
4. NIMC paediatric version
5. NIMC long-stay paediatric version
6. NIMC Four A4 page version
7. National Inpatient Medication Chart User Guide including the paediatric versions
8. National Inpatient Medication Chart Four A4 page version User advice
9. National terminology, abbreviations and symbols to be used in the prescribing and administering of medicines in Australian hospitals
10. NPS NIMC Online Training Course
Glossary

1. The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) is an independent statutory authority charged with coordinating improvements in the safety and quality in health care in Australia. The ACSQHC developed the NIMC following a directive from health ministers for a common medication chart to be used in all Australian public hospitals.

2. The National Prescribing Service (NPS) is an independent public company. NPS works with health professionals, consumers government and industry to improve the health of all Australians through Quality Use of Medicines (QUM).