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health

Factsheet 8

Nurse practitioners and prescribing in Victoria

A question-and-answer sheet to help with the changes to nurse practitioner (NP) prescribing from July 2010

What are the new categories for NPs?

As of 1 July 2010, nurse practitioners (NPs) in Victoria now have a notation on their national professional registration indicating a category or broad area of practice.

The purpose of this notation is to give NP authority to prescribe under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981* (DPCS) when working in Victoria.

The notation is in one of the following areas:

- Nurse Practitioner category- Acute & Supportive Care
- Nurse Practitioner category - Care of the older person or Aged care
- Nurse Practitioner category - Critical care
- Nurse Practitioner category - Maternity Care
- Nurse Practitioner category - Mental Health
- Nurse Practitioner category - Paediatrics
- Nurse Practitioner category - Perioperative Care, or
- Nurse Practitioner category - Primary Care

Where are the new lists located?

The most recent version of approved lists are available on the Department of Health's website at:

www.health.vic.gov.au/dpu/prescriber/nurse.htm

What has happened to the previously approved NP lists?

All the previously approved NP lists have been amalgamated into the eight current categories. NP prescribing has not been limited by the transition to eight categories.



How have the lists been formulated?

The new lists were developed by the Nurses Board of Victoria (NBV) via a process that included reviewing existing NP lists and nationally agreed clinical protocols or guidelines. A program of expert consultation was also undertaken with medical and nursing specialty colleges.

The NBV lists (and process used to develop and consult) were then reviewed by a departmental committee that provides advice on prescribing matters to the Minister for Health or Secretary of Department of Health.

What do the references in the list mean?

The references in the NP lists are used to provide a detailed list of the individual agents included in the approved class of poisons. This reference is needed because sometimes the class of poison descriptor is not clear.

I am a pharmacist and have been asked to fill a script written by an NP. How do I know if the NP is able to prescribe the medication?

The NP's script should indicate the category of their notation. You can then confirm that the nurse is an NP by checking the NMBA register of nurses at: www.ahpra.gov.au/en/Registration/Registers-of-Practitioners.aspx

The approved lists for the categories are available at: www.health.vic.gov.au/dpu/prescriber/nurse.htm

The NP should also provide contact details so they can answer any questions you might have about the script.

Is an NP allowed to prescribe everything from the list?

An NP is allowed to prescribe all of the medications from their formulary. NPs have a professional responsibility to work within their scope of practice and must be competent in all areas of practice, which includes prescribing medicines. The NP's employer has a duty of care to provide the necessary clinical governance framework to support this practice.

The Commonwealth is developing an NP 'prescribing' list. What does this mean?

Commonwealth legislation has now been passed that will allow some NPs to access the Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS) from November 2010. PBS access may only apply to some NPs and be restricted to some drugs that those NPs will prescribe.

This PBS access is distinct from the state-based authority to prescribe under DPCS Act.

The federal Department of Health and Ageing is currently consulting on the process and extent of the PBS access for NPs. As details become available they will be posted on our website at: www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing/furthering/practitioner

Want to know more?

Refer to Fact sheets 2, 3 and 5.

To find out more about nursing in Victoria and NPs, visit:

www.health.vic.gov.au/nursing

To find out more about Victoria's Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981 and its associated Regulations, go to:

www.health.vic.gov.au/dpu/reqhealth

To view the current approved NP drug lists for NPs in Victoria, visit:

www.health.vic.gov.au/dpu/prescriber/nurse.htm