



National Prescribing Service Limited

Drug Utilisation Briefings for Enhanced Divisional Quality Use of Medicines (EDQUM)

Introduction

The National Prescribing Service (NPS) is a national body whose goal is to improve the health of Australians through the quality prescribing of medicines.

The NPS has developed and implemented programs for all 3 target drug groups chosen for Enhanced Divisional Quality Use of Medicines (EDQUM). As a result, there are a variety of NPS resources available immediately, plus a detailed understanding within the organisation, gained through our programs, of current quality prescribing issues for each target drug group at a national level.

The aim of this series of Drug Utilisation Briefings is to assist Divisions to identify the quality prescribing questions they wish to address locally through their EDQUM program.

For each EDQUM target drug group the relevant Drug Utilisation Briefing contains:

- the source of clinical practice guidelines;
- the range of NPS resources available;
- a brief overview of current knowledge about prescribing in each area;
- a consideration of the limitations of the PBS dataset as a data source;
- a summary of future developments (new drugs or updated guidelines);
- the principles of quality prescribing and related quality prescribing questions and data questions; and
- an outline of future resources to be developed.

The National Strategy for the Quality Use of Medicines in Australia¹ defines quality use of medicines (QUM) as the:

- judicious selection of management options;
- appropriate choice of medicines, where a medicine is considered necessary; and
- safe and effective use of medicines.

(see appendix 1 for further information)

These three key components must be central to the development of any QUM program, at a national or divisional level. Therefore the core principles of quality prescribing reflect these three components of QUM, based on a review of the current best practice guidelines and a review of the clinical literature and QUM principles in general.

Quality prescribing questions and data questions have been developed using these core principles and through our understanding of current prescribing practices and QUM issues in each of the target drug groups. These questions are provided to stimulate discussion amongst prescribers. Consider which of the quality prescribing questions identified at a national level are relevant locally.

We have purposefully not restricted the principles of quality prescribing and quality prescribing questions to those which may be answered or investigated further by the use of data collected during EDQUM programs, because we do not feel that such a separation is clinically appropriate. Nor is it useful for those Divisions who are concentrating on education related

activities. We will be working closely with the EDQUM Data Consultancy over the coming months to develop the drug utilisation data aspects of EDQUM.

It was evident from the Divisional face-to-face meeting (September 2002) that there is a wide variation between Divisions as to the stage of development and focus of their EDQUM program. Some Divisions are already very familiar with the relevant NPS programs, others are less familiar. These preliminary resources have been structured with this in mind.

Next stages:

These preliminary resources are working documents subject to ongoing development as EDQUM programs develop. We will be working closely with ADGP, the EDQUM Data Consultancy and all EDQUM Divisions to develop further resources. The section headings in the background resource documents give an indication of the types of resources we currently envisage developing but we will be guided by the feedback from Divisions as to their requirements.

Comments and feedback are most welcome and a necessary part of the development of any future resources.

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Appendix 1.

The definition of QUM as defined by: The National Strategy for Quality Use of Medicines in Australia,

Reference:

1. The National Strategy for the Quality Use of Medicines in Australia, Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. Publ. 2002. Electronic version available via <http://www.health.gov.au/haf/nmp/quality.htm>

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The definition of QUM as defined by: The National Strategy for Quality Use of Medicines in Australia,

The National Strategy for Quality Use of Medicines
(Commonwealth Dept of Health and Ageing 2002).

States that:

The definition of QUM involves:

- **Judicious selection of management options**

This means consideration of the place of medicines in treating illness and maintaining health, recognising that for the management of many disorders non-drug therapies may be the best option;

- **Appropriate choice of medicines, where a medicine is considered necessary**

This means that, when medicines are required, selecting the best option from the range available taking into account the individual, the clinical condition, risks, benefits, dosage, length of treatment, co-morbidities, other therapies and monitoring considerations. Appropriate selection also requires a consideration of costs, both human and economic. These costs should be considered both for the individual, the community and the health system as a whole; and

- **Safe and effective use**

This means ensuring best possible outcomes of therapy by monitoring outcomes, minimising misuse, over-use and under-use, as well as improving the ability of all individuals to take appropriate actions to solve medication-related problems, eg, adverse effects and managing multiple medications.