

Saturday, 21 March 2020

Open letter to Prescribers

Prescribing Hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19

As the National President of the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) representing Australia's 32,000 Pharmacists, we are providing this open letter to all Australian prescribers regarding the **Prescribing hydroxychloroquine for COVID-19**.

On the background of some promising data showing the effectiveness of hydroxychloroquine for the treatment of COVID-19 and with President Trump's announcement yesterday, 20 March 2020, that the drug **hydroxychloroquine** may support the care of patients affected by COVID-19, Australian community pharmacies have seen unprecedented demand for the drug.

PSA is receiving reports from Australian pharmacists that they are receiving prescriptions from: doctors prescribing for other doctors and their families; as well as dentists prescribing to the community and their families; Non-medical prescribers prescribing bulk amounts of the drug. If this medication does indeed have the efficacy that we would desire against COVID-19 then it needs to be prescribed and used judiciously. The stock of this medication needs to be managed effectively and utilised for those who may genuinely need it.

Our strong advice to pharmacists at this point in time, until further advice is available, is to refuse the dispensing of hydroxychloroquine if there is not a genuine need, and that need is for those indications for what it is approved for – inflammatory conditions or the suppression and treatment of malaria. The current stock of hydroxychloroquine needs to be managed sensibly, it needs to be available for those who are currently being prescribed this medicine, and it may also be needed for treatment of COVID-19 in the future. We are urging pharmacists to manage their existing stock if they have it sensibly, ensuring those who are currently prescribed the medicine have an existing supply.

PSA will continue to work with the Minister for Health and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) with regards to the appropriate management of national stockpiles and medicines stock in Australia. PSA would like to keep safe any stock of hydroxychloroquine held in local pharmacies – so it is available to treat patients who genuinely need this medicine. The only way this is possible is for prescribers to not write prescriptions for this medicine as a 'just in case' measure and for pharmacists to refuse the supply outside of these indications at this point in time.

While the data may not yet be clear, if hydroxychloroquine is shown to be effective for COVID-19, we want every dose available to treat those who may require it.

Yours sincerely,



Associate Professor Chris Freeman
PSA National President