Government of Western Australia
Department of Health

Medicines for COVID-19 in residential care facilities and Aboriginal health services

To facilitate timely treatment of vulnerable patients, the Australian Government has pre-placed stock of new oral disease-modifying COVID-19 treatments in residential aged care facilities (RACF) and Aboriginal community-controlled health services (ACCHS). The usual supply mechanisms via community pharmacies will likely be delayed until these newly approved treatments are funded under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). These medicines are part of the National Medical Stockpile (NMS).

A factsheet about use of Lagevrio® (molnupiravir) in residential aged care is available on the Commonwealth Department of Health website.

Do RACF and ACCHS need a Permit to store these medicines at their facilities?

No, an Authorisation has been issued under the *Public Health Act 2016* to allow appropriate health professionals at RACF and ACCHS to receive, store, administer and, if appropriate, supply COVID-19 disease modifying medicines from the NMS. This means RACF and ACCHS do not need a Permit under the Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016 (the Regulations) to be able to accept stock from the NMS and use that stock to treat their residents or patients.

When storing and using prescription only (Schedule 4, S4) medicines from the NMS, facilities that already have an applicable Permit should follow their usual procedures for managing the medicines covered by their Permit.

Who can administer doses of these medicines to residents and patients?

RACF and ACCHS should follow their usual procedures that are applicable to administration of prescription medicines that have not been dispensed for an individual resident or patient at a pharmacy. These medicines are often referred to as ‘imprest’ or ‘stock supply’ medicines.

Imprest medicines have not been labelled in a manner that supports safe administration by a carer, or other healthcare worker, who does not have a professional authority under the Medicines and Poisons Regulations 2016.

In RACF and ACCHS, registered nurses, enrolled nurses, Aboriginal health practitioner and Aboriginal health workers all have a professional authority under the Regulations to administer doses, once they have received a patient-specific direction from a prescriber. Providers may have policies in place that further limit who can administer doses of medicines to residents and patients, based on individual staff competency and credentialing.

Oral disease-modifying COVID-19 treatments are all S4 medicines. This means a medication order or direction to administer, from a prescriber, is required before treatment can commence.

Who can supply patients with packs of oral COVID-19 treatments for self-administration?

The Regulations allow a prescriber to supply their patient with any medicine that they are authorised to prescribe.

As an acute condition is being treated, healthcare organisations with a Permit may also consider issuing a Structured Administration and Supply Arrangement (SASA) if they require a health professional, other than a prescriber, to supply one of these medicines to a patient to self-administer. It is recommended that any SASA should only allow supply to occur once treatment of the patient with the medicine has been authorised by a prescriber.

If a supply for the purpose of self-administration is being made, the pack must be labelled as detailed in the Regulations. Labels must include details of the medicine including the dose to be taken, the patient's name, contact details for the supplying facility and prescriber and the date of supply.

Can oral COVID-19 treatments be repackaged into dose administration aids?

Oral disease-modifying treatments for adults with COVID-19 that are available in Australia are new drugs, with limited information available about their chemical stability. It is unknown whether these products will retain their potency or physical integrity if packed into a dose administration aid (DAA), such as a Webster-pak®.

The Australian Product Information for molnupiravir states the capsules should be stored in their original bottle. Verbal advice from the manufacturer is that stability data is only available in relation to storage in the original bottle and the bottle should be stored away from heat, light and moisture.

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