Australian Government

Department of Health

Advice for approved pharmacists supplying PBS medicines to patients in areas affected by bushfire in NSW – October 2013

Pharmacists should note that the following arrangements apply in areas that have been affected by widespread bushfires in NSW. These arrangements have immediate effect and will apply until at least 31 October 2013.

Patient Entitlement

If patients do not have their Medicare, DVA or Centrelink card, the pharmacist should ring the usual PBS Inquiry line 132 290, for assistance with a patient's Medicare or concessional details.

Dispensing medicines under the 3 day emergency supply rule without a prescription

A patient can receive a 3 day supply of medication without a prescription, in accordance with existing NSW emergency supply provisions under the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008. Note that this provision does not apply to Schedule 4, Appendix-D medications or Schedule 8 medications.

A pharmacist may dispense using the 'owing prescription' provision

The pharmacist can confirm the patient's current medication details with the prescriber, or a prescriber may direct a pharmacist to supply a medicine to a patient in an emergency situation. Patients may be issued the amount authorised by the prescriber. The prescriber must forward a paper prescription to the pharmacy to cover the emergency supply as soon as practicable, in accordance with the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008.

Continued Dispensing

For patients requiring urgent supply of oral contraceptives or cholesterol lowering medicines (statins), pharmacists may dispense a single PBS quantity under Continued Dispensing arrangements. Supply of medicines under these circumstances must be consistent with the *Guidelines for the Continued Dispensing of eligible prescribed medicines by pharmacists*. Information about Continued Dispensing is available from www.5cpa.com.au.

Medicines subject to the 4/20 day rule

In cases where patients have lost medication due to the bushfires, or the medication is no longer usable, the pharmacist may provide a subsequent supply, but must endorse the prescription with the words 'immediate supply necessary' and sign the PBS prescription.

PBS Authority line 1800 888 333 (PBS) 1800 552 580 (RPBS)

If prescribers contact the Authority line and the prescription falls under the 'too soon' rule [because of the loss of an approved authority prescription or valid repeats], the Department of Human Services ('the Department') will exempt these patients from the 'too soon' rule and approve the Authority. If the Authority line is unavailable, a message will indicate the process to be followed by prescribers - to endorse the prescription with the words 'emergency authorised', with a date, time and signature.

Emergency relocation of a pharmacy

Pharmacists seeking to temporarily relocate their approved pharmacy due to damage from the NSW bushfires should contact the Pharmacy Council of NSW for advice (1300 197 177) in the first instance, and send an email to the Department [pbs.approval.enquiries@humanservices.gov.au], quoting the name of the pharmacy, the current PBS approval number, current address of premises, proposed address of

premises, and expected timeframe for return to the approved premises. The Australian Community Pharmacy Authority will fast track these requests for temporary relocation within 24 hours, in most instances. The Department of Health will advise wholesaler distributors of the temporary approval of the new premises, to facilitate delivery of PBS medicines to the new address.
NB: The PBS pharmacy approval number will not change for these temporary relocations.

Medicine distribution arrangements
The Department of Health is monitoring PBS supply arrangements in areas affected by the NSW bushfires to ensure that patient access to essential medicines can continue during this period of emergency.

Telecommunications impact on PBS Online
The NSW bushfires may affect telecommunications capacity in some areas. Approved pharmacists in these areas may not have real-time connection to the Department for prescription verification and entitlement checking. Any service interruption will not affect your PBS claim as your dispensing software will store all claimed items until the telecommunications and connection with the Department through PBS Online are restored.

Claiming - Missing prescriptions/no paperwork
If your pharmacy has lost or damaged paperwork due to the NSW bushfire emergency you can submit a Statutory Declaration to the Department. This should include a statement about loss of paperwork as a result of the natural disaster/emergency, and an undertaking that if the paperwork is found it will be forwarded to the Department and that an insurance claim has not been made.

For example, the wording for the Statutory Declaration would need the following:

- I cannot provide the paper prescriptions to support this claim because of the effects of the October 2013 NSW Bushfires.
- I have not, and will not make a claim against my insurance company for the lost claim, and if the prescriptions are located I will forward them to the Department of Human Services with a note of explanation stating that I will not resubmit these prescriptions for payment.

A completed Statutory Declaration may be sent to:

Teams Manager, Pharmaceutical Benefits
Department of Human Services
GPO Box 9826
in your state – please call 132 290 for details

PLEASE NOTE: In addition to the above, if the claim is a Claims Transmission System (CTS) claim the pharmacy must provide a copy of the CTS disk with the claim header to be eligible for payment.

Pharmacists enquiring about payment for claims with missing prescriptions due to the natural disaster/emergency can phone 132 290 and ask to speak with a Teams Manager.

Pharmacists can download a Statutory Declaration form from the following government website: www.ag.gov.au/statdec or purchase one from any post office or newsagent.

Pharmacists experiencing difficulties lodging their paperwork with the Department within the required timeframe are urged to contact the PBS Inquiry Line on 132 290 to discuss their options.

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