OBJECTIVES

- To provide direction to health care professionals who are authorized by legislation to dispense medications to patients for the completion of their treatment plan.

- This guideline is intended for patients who are being discharged from the Emergency Department (ED) or Urgent Care Centre (UCC) who require one (1) to two (2) doses of medication to complete their treatment plan; however, do not require a prescription.

APPLICABILITY

Compliance with this document is required by all Alberta Health Services employees, members of the medical and midwifery staffs, students, volunteers, and other persons acting on behalf of Alberta Health Services (including contracted service providers as necessary).

ELEMENTS

1. Points of Emphasis

   1.1 In specific circumstances, patients discharged from an ED / UCC may require the dispensing of a maximum of two (2) doses of medication to complete their treatment plan but do not require a prescription for ongoing therapy.

      a) A medication order on the health record from an authorized prescriber is required prior to dispensing a medication.

   1.2 The health care professional (in accordance with their scope of practice) may dispense a maximum of two (2) doses of medication in order to complete a patient’s treatment plan if:
a) A community pharmacist cannot be reasonably accessed by the patient before the next dose of medication is due.

**Exception:** An authorized prescriber may order partial-opioid agonist therapy medications (e.g., buprenorphine/naloxone) for the treatment of opioid use disorder until the patient can access an opioid use disorder treatment program. In these circumstances, the healthcare professional may dispense the quantity of doses as ordered.

1.3 If the patient requires a prescription for ongoing therapy to complete their treatment plan, refer to the Alberta Health Services (AHS) Medication Supply: Bridging Discharged Patients to Community Policy and Procedure.

2. **Education of the Patient When Dispensing a Medication**

2.1 The health care professional shall provide the patient with adequate information on their medications to assist them following discharge. Every effort should be made to provide information in an appropriate language and format. AHS Interpretation and Translation Services should be contacted to support communication, if needed.

2.2 If the patient’s supply of medication is an opioid under “Part A – Opioids Subject to the Prescription Labelling Provisions” of the Health Canada Opioids List, the health care professional shall provide the Opioid Medicines - Information for Patients and Families (Health Canada) handout to the patient.

2.3 The information provided shall include the purpose of the medication. It shall be specific to that patient and may include: consumer medicine information and arrangements for follow-up care.

3. **Dispensing Medication**

3.1 When dispensing medication for a patient, the health care professional shall ensure that:

a) The medication is appropriate for the client;

b) the order is filled correctly;

c) patient education in accordance with Section 2 is completed;

d) **appropriate dispensing procedures** are used;

e) the medication is packaged properly, using child-resistant containers where appropriate (when child-resistant containers are not available, the health care professional shall ensure the patient is aware of the risks); and

f) the container is properly labelled, including:
(i) patient's name;
(ii) prescriber’s name and designation;
(iii) medication name;
(iv) medication strength/dosage;
(v) directions for use;
(vi) route of administration (write out, do not abbreviate);
(vii) amount dispensed;
(viii) date dispensed;
(ix) auxiliary label - “KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN”;
(x) opioid warning sticker, if the medication is an opioid under “Part A – Opioids subject to the prescription labelling provisions” of the Health Canada Opioids List;
(xi) expiration date, when appropriate;
(xii) dispenser’s initials: and
(xiii) dispensing site, location or unit within the site, and the site’s telephone number.

3.2 A final check and verification of the above information by the dispensing health care professional is required prior to dispensing the medication. If applicable, refer to the AHS Independent Double Check Guideline.

4. Documentation

4.1 Each time a medication is dispensed, the health care professional shall ensure that the transaction is recorded on the patient’s health record (not on the medication administration record [MAR]) and include the following information:

a) The name of the patient for whom the medication was dispensed;
b) the name of the prescriber of the medication;
c) the date the medication was dispensed;
d) the name, strength, and dosage form of the medication dispensed;
e) the quantity of the medication dispensed;
f) the route of administration and directions for use; and
g) verification that teaching was provided to the patient regarding their medication.

DEFINITIONS

Appropriate dispensing procedures means dispensing procedures that are hygienic, maintain the stability of the medication, use the proper diluents and mixing procedures, prevent cross-contamination and comply with any requirements applicable to the specific medication, per Alberta College of Pharmacists Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians.

Authorized prescriber means a health care professional who is permitted by Federal and Provincial legislation, their regulatory college, Alberta Health Services, and Practice setting (where applicable) to prescribe medications.

Dispense(ing) means to provide a medication pursuant to a prescription for a person but does not include the administration of a medication to a person. Dispensing is a restricted activity under law [Government Organization Act (Alberta)].

Health care professional means an individual who is a member of a regulated health discipline, as defined by the Health Disciplines Act (Alberta) or the Health Professions Act (Alberta), and who practises within scope and role.

Health record means the Alberta Health Services legal record of the patient’s diagnostic, treatment and care information.

Order means a direction given by a regulated health care professional to carry out specific activity(-ies) as part of the diagnostic and/or therapeutic care and treatment to the benefit of a patient/client. An Order may be written (including handwritten and/or electronic), verbal, by telephone or facsimile.

Patient means an adult or child who receives or has requested health care or services from Alberta Health Services and its health care providers or individuals authorized to act on behalf of Alberta Health Services. This term is inclusive of residents, clients and outpatients.

Prescription means, for the purpose of this document, an instruction written by an authorized prescriber that authorizes a patient to be provided a medicine to them. This type of order must meet the requirements of the Pharmacy And Drug Act (Alberta).

REFERENCES

- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
  - Independent Double Check Guideline (#PS-60-01)
  - Medication Supply: Bridging Discharged Patients to Community Policy (#HCS-02)
  - Medication Supply: Bridging Discharged Patients to Community Procedure (#HCS-02-01)
- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:
  - Health Canada Opioids List
GUIDELINE

TITLE
Dispensing of Medications to Patients with a Discharge Medication Order

EFFECTIVE DATE
December 18, 2018

DOCUMENT #
HCS-226-01

- Medication Guidelines, March 2015 (College & Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta [CARNA])
- Opioid Medicines - Information for Patients and Families (Health Canada)
- Pharmacy and Drug Act (Alberta)
- Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians (Alberta College of Pharmacists)

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