



TITLE

DISTRIBUTING MEDICATION SAMPLES TO OUTPATIENTS

SCOPE

Provincial: Outpatient and Community-based Clinics and Urgent Care Centres

DOCUMENT #

HCS-233-01

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Clinical Operations Executive Committee

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SPONSOR

Provincial Medication Management Committee

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Medication Samples Policy (#HCS-233)

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NOTE: The first appearance of terms in bold in the body of this document (except titles) are defined terms – please refer to the Definitions section.

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OBJECTIVES

- To establish a safe, consistent, and transparent approach for distributing **medication samples** (including **natural health products**) to **outpatients** within Alberta Health Services (AHS) outpatient and community-based clinics and urgent care centres.

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

- Health care professionals** distributing medication samples shall have the knowledge, competency, and authorization to provide these services, and ensure they are acting within their scope of practice.
- If the medication sample is to be administered immediately to the **patient**, this procedure does not apply.

2. Prior to Distributing a Medication Sample in an Outpatient or Community-based Clinic or Urgent Care Centre

- The health care professional shall ensure there is a valid medication **order** from an **authorized prescriber** on the patient's **health record** (refer to the AHS *Medication Orders Policy* and procedures).

2.2 The health care professional shall ensure the medication sample has been stored according to the manufacturer's instructions (for example, the label on the medication sample), does not appear to be damaged or deteriorating, and has expiry dating appropriate for the expected duration of sample therapy.

3. Distributing a Medication Sample in an Outpatient or Community-based Clinic or Urgent Care Centre

3.1 When distributing a medication sample to a patient, the health care professional must ensure that:

- a) **appropriate dispensing procedures** are used; and
- b) the medication sample selected from storage, along with the dosage form, strength, and quantity are in accordance with the medication order.

3.2 Each individual medication sample package distributed to a patient shall be labelled according to Alberta College of Pharmacy standards with the expiry date clearly visible and include:

- a) name of the patient;
- b) name and telephone number of the site, outpatient unit or clinic, where the medication sample was distributed;
- c) name of the authorized prescriber;
- d) date the medication sample was distributed;
- e) description of the medication sample (generic name, strength, and manufacturer for single entity medications, or the brand name and strength for combination medications);
- f) directions for use, including route of administration;
- g) quantity distributed;
- h) auxiliary label – “KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN”; and
- i) initials of the health care professional who distributed the medication sample package to the patient.

3.3 Each labelled medication sample package should be placed in a labelled child-resistant container if feasible. When child-resistant containers cannot be used, the health care professional shall ensure the patient is aware of the risks.

3.4 A final check and verification of the above information by the distributing health care professional is required prior to distributing the medication sample to a patient. When possible, another health care professional should also perform a final check and verification of the above information.

4. Patient Education

- 4.1 The health care professional shall ensure the patient or patient's alternate decision-maker is aware of and confirms their understanding of the following information:
- a) reason for the medication, including the availability and source of future supplies and arrangements for follow-up care;
 - b) procedures to be followed for the proper administration and compliance with or use of the medication;
 - c) instructions for proper medication storage, handling, and disposal;
 - d) allergies or common adverse effects that may apply to the patient, and recommendations to minimize the risk associated with them;
 - e) signs and symptoms that indicate a response to the medication, and when to contact their prescriber;
 - f) cautions regarding activities, food, or other medications that may affect the patient's response to the medication or pose a risk to the patient; and
 - g) associated risks of the medication not being distributed in a child-resistant package (if applicable).
- 4.2 In addition to the information above, written medication teaching sheets may be provided. Pharmacy Services has adopted Lexicomp Online Patient Care as the written standard for patient medication information.

5. Documentation

- 5.1 The health care professional shall document the following in the patient's health record:
- a) rationale for using a medication sample;
 - b) name of the authorized prescriber who ordered the medication;
 - c) date the medication sample was distributed;
 - d) generic name and manufacturer, or the brand name of the medication sample distributed;
 - e) expiry date of the medication sample;
 - f) strength and dosage form of the medication sample distributed;
 - g) directions for use, including route of administration;
 - h) quantity distributed;

- i) verification that teaching was provided to the patient regarding their medication sample; and
- j) if applicable, the name of the second health care professional verifying the labelling information as per Section 3.4 above.

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 the Alberta College of Pharmacy *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.

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 collection of all records documenting individually identifying health information in relation to a single person.

Medication means any substance or mixture of substances manufactured, sold or represented for use in the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention of a disease, disorder or abnormal physical state, or its symptoms, in human beings, and restoring, correcting or modifying organic functions in human beings.

Natural health products mean medicinal products containing herbs, vitamins, minerals, and nutritional supplements (also known as traditional, natural, holistic or homeopathic medicines).

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.

Outpatient means a patient staying at home or in another facility that is not a designated hospital in Alberta, or who is accepted as a registered patient for goods or services offered or delivered by, on behalf of or in conjunction with Alberta Health Services, but who returns to their normal abode after the good or service is rendered or delivered.

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.

Sample(s) means a trial package of medication distributed by the manufacturer without cost. Also known as a clinical evaluation package.

REFERENCES

- Alberta Health Services Governance Documents:
 - *Medication Orders Policy* (#PS-93)
 - *Medication Orders Procedure* (#PS-93-01)
 - *Medication Samples Policy* (#HCS-233)
- Non-Alberta Health Services Documents:
 - *Medication Management Standards* (Accreditation Canada)
 - *Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians* (Alberta College of Pharmacy)

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