



NEW ZEALAND HOSPITAL PHARMACISTS' ASSOCIATION

GUIDELINES FOR MEDICINES INFORMATION CENTRES

March 2018

Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to describe requirements for the operation of a Medicines Information Centre that consistently provides a safe, high quality service.

Definitions

The following terms have a special meaning within this document:

Medicines Information Provision – The provision of information about medicines is a core professional activity of pharmacists and therefore an important function of any pharmacy service. Medicines information provision can be classified as reactive or proactive. Reactive medicines information is responding to information needs, or questions, as they arise. Proactive provision of medicines information includes providing education in areas of anticipated information need and developing resources for health professionals or patients.

Medicines Information Centre – a physical space or facility specifically set up for, and specialising in, the provision of Medicines Information. It houses the resources, both information and human, required to run such a service.

Medicines Information Pharmacist – a pharmacist specialising in the provision of Medicines Information. A Medicines Information Pharmacist usually works in a Medicines Information Centre.

Pharmacist with a special interest in Medicines Information – a pharmacist with a specific responsibility for Medicines Information provision within their hospital.

Medicines Information Manager / Chief / Team Leader – a Medicines Information Pharmacist responsible for the running of a Medicines Information Centre.

Medicines Information New Zealand (MINZ) – a working subgroup of the Medicines Information and Clinical Pharmacy Special Interest Group of the NZHPA. It is made up of Medicines Information Pharmacists and pharmacists with a special interest in Medicines Information.

1 Services

A Medicines Information Centre offers the following services for at least 8 hours a day, with after-hours arrangements as appropriate:

- 1.1 Reactive Medicines Information provision - responding to medicines-related questions or enquiries. Priority is given to enquiries affecting individual patient care. Monitoring and follow up of patient therapy and progress is undertaken when appropriate.
- 1.2 Proactive Medicines Information provision – active promotion and support of the optimal use of medicines. This may include:
 - a. Publication of newsletters or bulletins
 - b. Preparation of evaluations, guidelines and reports
 - c. Participation in the education of pharmacy interns and continuing education of pharmacists and other health professionals
 - d. Participation in the reporting of adverse drug reactions
 - e. Management of medicines-related information for the hospital on an intranet and/or the internet

2 Operation

The operation of a Medicines Information Centre should include:

- 2.1 Adequate staff to fulfil service requirements outlined in the previous section i.e. no less than one pharmacist full time equivalent (FTE). Allowance must be made for specialised services and administrative assistance.
- 2.2 Standard operating procedures covering essential aspects of centre operation such as enquiry receipt, enquiry processing, format of responses, enquiry documentation, and database management.
- 2.3 Maintenance of appropriate records of all requests and consultations to enable statistical evaluation of workload and quality assurance. This would include at least the date, enquirer name and address, request, response, sources used, signature (or identifying code if computerised), time for response and type of enquiry.

3 Facilities

Facilities of a Medicines Information Centre should include:

- 3.1 Designated space and equipment sufficient for storage of reference collection and provision of services.

- 3.2 Allocation within the budget to cover capital and operating costs.
- 3.3 A direct telephone line available for the regular opening hours and provision for after-hours service (such as an answer phone or forwarding to the on-call pharmacist).
- 3.4 A dedicated e-mail address for the Medicines Information Centre.
- 3.5 An electronic database to store enquiries.
- 3.6 Access to a medical library, inter-library loan facilities and the internet.
- 3.7 Access to a fax machine.

4 Personnel

4.1 Education and Training

A Medicines Information Pharmacist must possess a current New Zealand annual practicing certificate in the pharmacist scope of practice.

Additional training in a Medicines Information Centre, either in New Zealand or overseas, is required. Training in a Medicines Information Centre should include completion of the New Zealand Medicines Information Training Workbook.

Postgraduate qualifications such as a Post Graduate Diploma or Masters in Clinical Pharmacy are desirable. Other relevant studies may include medical informatics and evidence-based medicine.

4.2 Experience

A Medicines Information Pharmacist should have a minimum of 3 years post-registration experience in various areas of pharmacy practice, including hospital clinical pharmacy experience.

4.3 Skills

A Medicines Information Pharmacist must demonstrate the following:

- a. Ability to receive enquiries effectively, including gathering sufficient detail to establish the context of the question and enable an appropriately individualised answer.
- b. Competence in selection, evaluation and utilisation of the medical literature and other resources.
- c. Awareness of primary, secondary and tertiary information sources and the ability to use them effectively.
- d. Verbal communication skills necessary for effectively, concisely conveying information or advice at a level appropriate to individual enquirers.

- e. Written communication skills necessary for preparation of written responses, medicines information bulletins and other medicines-related reports.
- f. Knowledge of clinical medicine use and therapeutics and the ability to liaise with clinical services.
- g. Knowledge and acceptance of the legal and ethical responsibilities in supplying medicines information.
- h. Ability to contribute to training and teaching activities such as in-service education of pharmacists and other health professionals.

5 Information Resources

- 5.1 A Medicines Information Centre should maintain, or have access to, a current collection of reference materials appropriate to the scope and nature of the services provided. This includes books, journals and electronic databases. The Recommended Resources List developed and maintained by MINZ may be used as a guide.
- 5.2 The local collection must be sufficiently complete to ensure timely response to requests.
- 5.3 The centre should actively consult with specialists if an enquiry falls outside scope of practice.

6 Quality Assurance

Overall quality assurance of a Medicines Information Centre should include:

- 6.1 Procedures such that all enquiries are answered using at least two sources, with the exception of enquiries about funding which may only require consultation with the Pharmaceutical Schedule.
- 6.2 Procedures to ensure that all written replies (letter, e-mail and fax) are referenced.
- 6.3 Provision for the maintenance and development of the Medicines Information pharmacist's clinical and medicines information knowledge and expertise.
- 6.4 Provision for medicines information responses to be reviewed by another pharmacist. For written enquiries and enquiries involving calculations or medicine use during pregnancy the review should take place prior to the answer being given.
- 6.5 Participation in any quality assurance programme for Medicines Information Centres endorsed by the New Zealand Hospital Pharmacists Association.
- 6.6 Procedures such that user satisfaction with the service provided is monitored e.g. a regular user satisfaction survey.