



NETWORKING HEALTH VICTORIA
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March 20, 2014

Ms Melinda Morris
Coroner's Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11/222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE 3000



Dear Ms Morris

Re: Investigation into the death of HELEN STAGOLL Court Ref. 2010/001624 -

I am writing in response to your letter dated 13th February 2014 in relation to Coroner Jacinta Heffey's recommendation page 24 clause I directed to General Practice Victoria in the findings into the death of Helen Stagoll.

GPV acknowledges the concerns raised by the Coroner and notes that within the GP Pharmacotherapy or ORT (opioid replacement therapy) Program the training curriculum:

- reinforces the requirement for prescribers to assess a patient's suitability before prescribing take-away doses
- emphasizes the importance of a periodic review of the patient's suitability for take-away method
- encourages regular communication with the dispensing pharmacist.

In preparing this reply, General Practice Victoria (GPV), now Networking Health Victoria (NHV) consulted with our Clinical Advisory Group (CAG), experts in pharmacotherapy engaged to provide clinical advice and direction on the delivery of the Pharmacotherapy Program to General Practitioners (GPs).

GPV's response to the Coroner's recommendation

Whilst the current GP Pharmacotherapy or ORT (opioid replacement therapy) Program curriculum includes information on the importance of educating patients on the signs of overdose and increased mortality risk with other sedative polysubstance use, the CAG agreed this message could be further reinforced.

To strengthen this message in line with the recommendation made at page 24 clause I, the curriculum materials will:

- include a screen shot of the patient information sheet "Starting methadone or buprenorphine" during training. This patient handout was developed by the Victorian Department of Health and provides information on overdose risks, recognition of overdose and how to seek help if an overdose is suspected. A pad of this resource consisting of tear off sheets is distributed in the participant resource pack following completion of training for GPs to give to each new patient.
- demonstrate the value of the "*Methadone treatment in Victoria – User information booklet*". Prescribing GPs are encouraged to provide all new patients with a copy of this resource which carries information on methadone toxicity, symptoms and how to respond if an overdose is suspected.



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At the completion of training the GPs are provided with a supply of these booklets to hand to patients as well as an order form.

The Clinical Advisory Group requested the following be made regarding the availability of naloxone to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA):

The announcement that naloxone autojets would be made more widely available in an attempt to reverse overdoses was a welcome change. Consideration needs to be given as to how the naloxone autojets will be made available to maximise access and proper use. If the only access point is the patient with the expectation that the naloxone autojets will be passed on to relevant people, this will surely limit the effectiveness of this strategy for obvious reasons. The simplest implementation would be a schedule change of the naloxone autojets to a recordable S3 medicine or pharmacist only S3 medicine. With this schedule change, access would be guaranteed with proper counselling to ensure appropriate use of the device in the correct situation. A network of 5300 pharmacies across the country could be accessed or some 2500 pharmacies that run ORT programs if a more targeted and focused approach with education is preferred.

I can be contacted for further information on 03 9341 5200 or email j.rasa@nhv.org.au.

Yours sincerely

Assoc. Professor John Rasa
CEO
Networking Health Victoria