



Secretary

Department of Health and Human Services



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BAC-5233

Coroner Sarah Gebert  
Coroners Court of Victoria  
65 Kavanagh Street  
Southbank VIC 3006

Dear Coroner Gebert

Thank you for your letter of 30 October 2019 that included your findings regarding the fatal overdose on [REDACTED] 2016 of [REDACTED] (Coroners reference: COR 2016 004886). In line with my obligations under the *Coroners Act 2008*, I am responding to your recommendations addressed to me.

Mr [REDACTED]'s death and your findings related to the uncoordinated communication between doctors is a reminder of why the SafeScript system has been implemented in Victoria.

The scope of medicines monitored in SafeScript was a key consideration during the planning and implementation of the system and the Department has taken an evidence-based approach, including seeking stakeholder views. The Coroner's Court 2018 data for overdose deaths by contributing drug type was also part of this consideration.

While the 2019 review did find evidence of increasing harm from pregabalin, its overall scale of harm was found to be proportionate to supply and was less than medicines currently monitored in SafeScript. The review also found evidence of risk when pregabalin was used in combination with opioids or benzodiazepines, which are monitored through SafeScript, rather than when used alone. Based on this, the SafeScript Expert Advisory Group concluded that pregabalin in SafeScript was not the appropriate regulatory control at this stage, especially given clinicians are adjusting to the new system.

A framework has been developed and published to guide future consideration of the addition of new medicines in SafeScript. Using this, the department will continue to observe data and review any new evidence of harm for pregabalin and other medicines not currently monitored.

The interval between each review will be no longer than every five years, or when there is compelling new evidence of harm for medicines. The framework can be found at [www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/factsheets/criteria-monitored-medicines](http://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/factsheets/criteria-monitored-medicines) and any submissions from your Court would be welcome.

Yours sincerely



**Kym Peake**  
Secretary

5/2/2020