

Consultation: Management and communication of medicines shortages

Asthma Australia is the nation's peak asthma body. We are supported and endorsed by some of the world's leading asthma health care professionals and researchers. Our staff and volunteers are leaders in their fields and together we strive to deliver excellence every day for people with asthma.

Asthma Australia supports the TGA proposal and processes requiring the reporting of all medicines shortages to the TGA by sponsors being made mandatory from 1 January 2019.

Specifically, Asthma Australia supports the proposed inclusion of non-prescription medicines, particularly emergency medicines such as salbutamol asthma inhalers that are available over the counter, that are critical for people with asthma in treating asthma symptoms. This is imperative, based on research that found, 56.6% of participants purchased all their relievers with a prescription, 24.3% purchased all over the counter and 19.1% utilised both prescription and over the counter to purchase their relievers.¹

It is understood that only those medicines shortages classified under a protocol led by the TGA as of 'extreme' or 'high' patient impact will be mandatorily published via the Medicines Shortages Information Initiative (MSII) on the TGA website. To support the timely public communication of medicine shortages, Asthma Australia urges the inclusion of consumer organisations into the notification process of all mandatory medicine shortages made to the TGA (as relevant to the organisation and their consumers), irrelevant of the 'extreme' or 'high' patient impact stratification. Many peak consumer bodies are embedded within the community as a trusted source of information and have access to consumers more readily, increasing the likelihood of consumers receiving the necessary information. This will allow timelier and accurate information transfer to consumers who are likely to be affected.

This process will need to be supported by a communication strategy that is targeted at the key stakeholders, the opportunity for consumer organisation to register for TGA notifications relating to medicine shortages and sponsors also encouraged to disclose this information to the relevant consumer groups.

We urge the TGA to work with patient/consumer organisations as well as Health Professional organisations to help develop and then disseminate consistent and accurate messages to the community regarding medicine shortages. Asthma Australia is pleased to see a formalised and mandatory process for the reporting and communication of medicine shortages.

¹ Reddel HK, et al. *BMJ Open* 2017;7:e016688. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2017-016688