

# Newsletter

December 2020



## Annual General Meeting

The 2020 Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> December at 3:30pm. This meeting will be followed by Invited Speaker presentations commencing at 4pm which will consist of four lightning style presentations on the VicTAG projects that have been completed or are underway. The schedule will be as follows:

4pm	<b>Multi-language medication patient information leaflets</b>	Hayley Griffin, Monash Health
4:10pm	<b>The use of beta-lactam antibiotic allergy assessment tool to improve medication safety</b>	Misha Devchand, Austin Health
4:20pm	<b>Pharmaceutical Waste Management</b>	Grace Wong, Western Health
4:30pm	<b>Handling of Hazardous Medicines</b>	Bishma Jayathilaka, Peter MacCallum Cancer Center

## DHHS COVID-19 Health Services Pharmaceutical Reference Group

The work of the Reference Group is now being finalised. In addition to the development of the Pharmaceutical Reserve, another initiative implemented was the reporting of stock holdings from each Victorian public hospital pharmacy store. This report provides visibility of stock of various medicines across Victoria, something that was not previously possible.

## Emergency and Life Saving Medicines Register

A November 2020 update of the Emergency and Life Saving Medicines (ELSM) Register has been uploaded to the website. As a part of the regular review process, each hospital is requested to please conduct a check of your hospital's stock levels against the list on the [ELSM Register](#). Email any changes to [victagelsd@gmail.com](mailto:victagelsd@gmail.com).

Some information from the Victorian Poisons Information Centre would like to pass on to VicTAG members are as follows:

- [Clinicians Health Channel](#) provides access to a number of Toxicology resources including the Austin Toxicology Guidelines (also available as an App), TOXINZ and Poisindex.
- Paraquat Dithionite Test Kits are used to assist the diagnosis of paraquat exposure/poisoning. Syngenta provides these test kits free of charge and they should be stocked in ALL Emergency Departments. To arrange for a test kit and treatment guide, email [sydney.reception@syngenta.com](mailto:sydney.reception@syngenta.com)
- Be aware that street "Xanax" may substances other than alprazolam. Refer to [NSW Health Safety Notice](#) for further information and a list of possible substances contained.
- Emergency Flucytosine stock is being held by Western Health, refer to the [ELSM page](#) on the VicTAG website for details on how to obtain supply.

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## Medication Safety Alerts

There were 17 responses received to the survey circulated on Medication Safety Alerts. Some points of interest from the responses were as follows:

- Many hospitals printed and displayed the posters in clinical areas, others used the information to create their own hospital specific alert and they were also used as supporting documents for accreditation.
- The most used posters were *Giving 3 or more? First make sure!*, *APINCH alert* and *High concentration insulin products*.
- 94% of respondents wanted to see the Alerts program continue
- Respondents wanted to see a shift of focus to alerts that are more directed/related to electronic medicines management and more timely in completion for new/critical topics

The results have been tabled at the VicTAG Management Committee who are working to revamping the program to address the feedback provided.

[Click here](#) to access the suite of existing Medication Safety Alerts.

## Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG) Update

CATAG, as part of the ViP bDMARDS program, has now released a [Position Statement on the use of low-dose methotrexate](#) which provides guidance on dispensing and administering low-dose methotrexate.

NPS MedicineWise have also launched a [bDMARDS webpage](#) which contains information about the broader project and the first release of resources for rheumatological conditions.

## Pharmaceutical Waste Management Project

This VicTAG project, led by Grace Wong, Western Health, has now been completed. The project aimed to develop a Victorian Framework for handling and disposal of Pharmaceutical Waste. The framework provides guidance for the identification, segregation, handling, storage and disposal of pharmaceutical waste generated by health services.

Grace formed and led the VicTAG Pharmaceutical Waste Advisory Group, a team of experts in the field, to develop the Framework. The individuals are acknowledged in the document and VicTAG is grateful for their important contribution to this work.

[Click here](#) to access the Framework and the accompanying training presentation

## VicTAG Funded Projects Update

Bishma Jayathilaka is leading a team of contributors from the Parkville Precinct hospitals to develop the Safe Handling of Medicines Framework. The project was put on hold due to COVID but has recommenced and is due to be completed mid 2021.

There was no project grant round held in 2020 due to the pressures of COVID and funds committed to the ongoing projects. A new grant round will be launched in 2021.

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## Twitter Account

VicTAG has now established a Twitter account. For updates on the latest information and document releases, please follow us @vic\_tag

## VicTAG Membership

VicTAG membership is open to all Victorian hospitals. Members are hospital pharmacists and medical specialists from Victorian public hospitals. Members can only be elected if their hospital is currently financial with VicTAG. Membership entitles representatives of your institution to attend meetings, vote on relevant issues, contribute to discussions and view the members section of this website.

[Become a VicTAG member](#) or email [professionalofficer@victag.org.au](mailto:professionalofficer@victag.org.au) for further information.

## VicTAG QUM Group

The VicTAG QUM group provides a support network for VicTAG member hospitals to identify issues which increase the risk of medication error and determine practices to improve medication safety. The group meets every 2 months, currently via videoconferencing and has an active discussion forum. If you are interested in participating, please email Wendy Ewing, VicTAG QUM chair [wendy.ewing@monashhealth.org](mailto:wendy.ewing@monashhealth.org)