

Introduction

At the November 2019 Annual General Meeting, A/Prof Jason Trubiano was elected as the new VicTAG Chair, with Kent Garrett moving to the Vice-Chair position. Dr Greg Weeks and James Dwyer remain as the Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. The full [VicTAG Management Committee](#) can be viewed on the website. Jason began the year looking to move us to a more on line platform, with most meetings scheduled to be held by videoconference and a new Twitter account set up to connect with members. As with most things in 2020, COVID-19 has impacted the activity of VicTAG. We have moved solely to video conferencing for all meetings for the Management Committee and the QUM Group, and unfortunately the Medicines Roundtable 2020 has been cancelled. As we look to settle into a new normal, we wanted to provide an update on the activities VicTAG have been involved in and provide an update on our current funded projects.

DHHS COVID-19 Health Services Pharmaceutical Reference Group

Following concerns of potential pharmaceutical shortages arising from increasing demand and/or supply chain issues, the VicTAG Management Committee proactively engaged DHHS Victoria to outline potential issues and mitigation strategies. Subsequently, the DHHS COVID-19 Health Services Pharmaceutical Reference Group was formed to provide strategic advice and feedback to the department on matters relevant to the supply and use of pharmaceuticals in Victorian health services, during the pandemic response and longer term recovery. Kent Garrett in co-chairing the group, and many of the VicTAG Management Committee, are also members of the Reference Group.

One of the measures put in place, is the development of a Pharmaceutical Reserve. A summary document and FAQ is available on the [Reports of Interest](#) section of the VicTAG website.

Medication Safety Alerts

Toni Howell, Medication Safety and Strategy Pharmacist at St Vincent's Melbourne has completed eight new Medication Safety Alerts which are now available on the website.

New posters available: *APINCH Alert, Influenza Immunisation Alert, Medication Acronym Alert, Acronym Case Example, Sodium Chloride Reminder,*

Coming soon: *Parkinson's Handover Alert, Be NICE – inform your patient about their medicines, Trade or Generic Name*

[Click here](#) to access the posters.

As the project has now come to an end, a survey will be circulated to the VicTAG membership to assist the Management Committee in deciding whether or not to continue funding this stream of work.

Emergency and Life Saving Medicines Register

A July 2020 update of the Emergency and Life Saving Medicines Register has been uploaded to the website. Some notable updates include:

- A new link to the NSWTAG Emergency and Life Saving Drugs registers has also been provided for circumstances where Victorian supply may not be able to meet demand. This recently occurred with silibinin following a spate of Amanita mushroom poisonings
- Updated supply details for methionine tablets following a recent surge in presentations of neurological symptoms following chronic nanging (inhalation of nitrous oxide via bulbs)
- Updated supply information for uridine triacetate who now have a UK based distributor (WEP Clinical)

Council of Australian Therapeutic Advisory Groups (CATAG) & NPS MedicineWise Update

CATAG, which is funded by NPS MedicineWise, has had a slight change in direction to align with the new direction of NPS MedicineWise. There will be more collaboration between the two organisations as NPS MedicineWise expand their scope into all areas of health care, including the acute sector.

CATAG is a member of a consortium, led by NPS MedicineWise, which has been engaged by the Australian Government Department of Health for a three-year project to develop a program to optimise health and economic outcomes for bDMARDs use (Value in Prescribing Program: bDMARDs). As a part of the project, CATAG is leading a revision of the CATAG Guiding principles for the governance of biological and biosimilars medicines.

NPS MedicineWise have also launched an information portal for medicinal cannabis. The new information helps explain the regulatory framework and process required to access medicinal cannabis for both consumers and health professionals, and provides summaries on the latest evidence for medicinal cannabis. To find out more go to www.nps.org.au/medicinal-cannabis

Completed VicTAG funded projects

Two projects funded in 2018 have now been completed.

[Project 1: The use of a beta-lactam antibiotic allergy assessment tool to improve medication safety – led by Misha Devchand, Austin Health](#)

The use of beta-lactam antibiotic allergy assessment tool to improve medication safety project has now been completed. Empowering nurses to complete the Antibiotic Allergy Assessment tool was found to improve documentation of allergies and identification of no risk and low-risk antibiotic allergy phenotypes. The Antibiotic Allergy Assessment Tool used in the project is now available on the website.

[Project 2: Medication related patient information leaflets in multiple languages – led by Hayley Griffin, Monash Health](#)

The Medication related patient information leaflets in multiple languages project is now complete. There are five leaflets available and they are designed to print with English one side and the translated language on the other side. Languages available are Arabic, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Punjabi, Simplified Chinese, Sinhalese, Spanish, Traditional Chinese and Vietnamese. The leaflets are available on the VicTAG website.

VicTAG Funded Projects Update

The two projects funded in 2019 are progressing:

- Grace Wong, Western Health, is leading the development of the Victorian Framework for Handling and Disposal of Pharmaceutical Waste. This project is nearing completion and should be available on the website by October 2020.
- Bishma Jayatilaka 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 is due to recommence in August.

For updates, check the [Current Projects](#) on the website.

Newsletter

July 2020



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 email discussion forum. If you are interested in participating, please email Wendy Ewing, VicTAG QUM chair wendy.ewing@monashhealth.org

A recent success story for the group is the case where a member highlighted the look-a-like potential of the sodium chloride 23.4% vials manufactured by Phebra® and the company's calcium gluconate and calcium chloride vials. Phebra® were provided with the feedback from the VicTAG QUM Group, and have committed to changing the label and cap colour, with a proposed design provided to the group for feedback.

[Become a VicTAG member.](#)

www.victag.org.au



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