

Office of the Chief Psychiatrist

COVID-19 Interim Clozapine Management Guideline

20 July 2021

Please check this [link](#) for the latest version of this document.

Following today's announcement of COVID-19 Level 5 restrictions in South Australia, the purpose of this interim guideline is to ensure that the risk of infection for this consumer group is reduced by limiting clinic visits for screening in line with the current SA Health COVID-19 guidelines.

This guideline is an interim measure to reduce the risk to vulnerable mental health consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring that they receive appropriate clozapine care and is not to be taken as a permanent change in management guidelines.

This information is supplementary to the SA Health [Clozapine Management Clinical Guideline](#) (CMCG).

This interim guideline (updated 20.07.21) applies to the clozapine clinics currently held within SA Health clozapine centres and has been extended to consumers prescribed clozapine in GP shared care.

The Office of the Chief Psychiatrist has consulted with the manufacturer Mylan in the development of these guidelines, approval for the interim guideline by Dr Jenni Curnow Consultant Haematologist was given on 25.03.2020.

In reviewing the interim guideline, the current State directions in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic have been considered. Updates and recommendations to the interim guideline have been made in line with the State directions and current SA Health requirements.

Each Local Health Network (LHN) in implementing the updated interim guideline is also to consider the current individual LHN directions.

For public health information about COVID-19 please check:

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/COVID2019

Standard Screening Questions

For all contacts the standard questions regarding COVID-19 risks are to be asked and assessed. Refer to the CBIS Novel Respiratory Pathogen Screening Tool under service plans. NB: the NRP screening tool is updated regularly in accordance with CDCB notifications.

Weekly Clozapine Monitoring

There are no changes to the current face to face appointment requirements for people who require weekly clozapine monitoring.

All consumers must be seen by a medical officer to have a review for signs and symptoms of infection and mental state review as per the SA Health [Clozapine Management Clinical Guideline](#). (CMCG)

Four Weekly Clozapine Monitoring

Consumers on four weekly monitoring are to continue to have a four weekly blood test as per the CMCG.

Extended dispensation for dispensing without a blood test is not recommended due to the increased risk of raised clozapine levels due to an infection. It is considered that regular blood monitoring is a safer option for people prescribed clozapine.

For stable consumers face to face assessment for signs and symptoms of infection and mental state review, can be conducted via teleconference or video conference arrangements.

Pharmacy prescription management

During this time of increased risk, prescription management will need to be streamlined. The aim is to reduce the amount of time a person is waiting in a pharmacy.

Prescriptions are to be faxed to the dispensing pharmacy, not to be given to consumers. The original prescription must be provided to the dispensing pharmacy within 7 days.

Pharmacists will need to be contacted and advised that:

- SA Health is requesting that prescriptions for clozapine are dispensed as soon as the prescription is received where possible, to minimise the waiting time for consumers in the pharmacy.
- The original prescription will be provided within 7 days
- Pharmacists are requested to contact the Mental Health Services within 48 hours if the person has not collected their prescription. This is to reduce the risk of therapy interruption.

Consumers are to be advised to provide their pharmacy with sufficient time to dispense the prescription before attending to collect their clozapine. This may need to be discussed with the pharmacist so that an indicative time can be given to consumers.

For people in mandatory isolation, pharmacy delivery if available is to be arranged. If this is not possible the MHS are to arrange medication delivery, contacting the person via telephone advising of the time of delivery. Medication is to be left at the person's door and further contact to be made to ensure the person has collected their medication.

GPs are to contact the relevant Community Mental Health Clozapine Coordinator if medication supply is noted to be an issue.

Supported Residential Facilities and Nursing Home management

For consumers in Supported Residential Facilities (SRF) and Nursing Homes, clozapine coordinators are to ascertain if there are GPs or nursing staff that are able to conduct the physical health assessments during the lockdown period. Questioning by facility staff may be required for the consumer's mental state and clozapine assessment.

Six Monthly Psychiatric Reviews

In accordance with local LHN directives and the current SA Health restrictions the face to face six-monthly psychiatric review of stable consumers and consumers in shared care can be completed by medical staff through the use of video or teleconferencing. See [OCP COVID-19 MH fact sheet March 18 2020](#)

Suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19

For consumers who are suspected cases of COVID-19, confirmed cases of COVID-19 or people who are on mandated home isolation, a home visit to undertake the required face to face assessment, is to be conducted using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), as advised by each LHN's Novel Respiratory Pathogen Management Guideline.

Any confirmed case of COVID-19 in a person prescribed clozapine will be managed in an inpatient setting due to the increased risk of clozapine toxicity.

SA Pathology provides an in home phlebotomy service for any consumer unable to access a collection centre. SA Pathology domiciliary service can be contacted on 82223000

For clozapine and blood dyscrasias in consumers with COVID-19 see the [South London and Maudsley NHS Trust information](#)

Clozapine Commencement

Due to the risk of side effects during the commencement of clozapine and current potential for infection within the community it is considered that new clozapine commencements place consumers at an increased level of risk.

If there is a clinical requirement for a consumer to be commenced on clozapine, the treating team is to:

- Communicate directly with the community team who would be assuming the care of the person to ensure there is capacity for the team including;
 - The community Consultant Psychiatrist has agreed to the proposed commencement
 - The community Clozapine Coordinator has been consulted regarding the proposed commencement
 - The community team has capacity to provide the necessary follow up for the consumer to ensure safe and effective care.
- Once consent from the community team has been given make a request of the LHN Mental Health Drug Committee providing evidence of the community support for approval.

NB: if the community team have provided their support, the approval from the LHN Mental Health drug committee should be cursory.

As always the best interest of the consumer is to be considered with the benefits of clozapine in potentially treating resistant psychosis, to be weighed against the additional risks of commencing and monitoring clozapine treatment at this time.

With the potential delay to some clozapine starts teams need to be mindful that community teams may have a limit to the number of weekly participants that they can safely manage. Communication with the community teams prior to commencing people on clozapine is required.

Annual Cardiac Assessments

The annual cardiac assessments, ECG and Echocardiograms (ECHO) scheduled for consumers during the time of community restrictions may be delayed by three months at this stage.

If there are concerns for a particular patient's cardiac health it is recommended that specialist input be sought. Annual pathology assessments for Troponin and CRP are still required to be taken with the regular pathology testing.

GP Shared care consumers returning to CMHS

Where a consumer is referred back from a GP practice for ongoing care, their care is to be managed in line with this interim guideline. In accordance with SA Health restrictions, once it is safe to do so, where possible consumers who were previously receiving their monitoring in GP shared care, should be encouraged to re-engage with their GP for ongoing monitoring, noting that this will be contingent on the GP practice being open.

Social Distancing

Acknowledging COVID-19 risks, for all persons seen, practitioners should practice social distancing (including keeping at least 1.5 metres away from others) during interviews and practice hygiene measures (including frequent hand washing, use of hand sanitiser and wiping frequently touched surfaces). More details on social distancing can be read on the web links. Clinicians are to pay particular attention to the cleaning of equipment between individual use and clozapine clinic offices on a daily basis.

Education and Prevention

All contacts with consumers is an opportunity to provide

1. Public health education and/or an information sheet about Coronavirus prevention
2. Mental health information related to the impacts of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Support for consumers feeling overwhelmed, distressed or needing additional mental health support in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic is available through the COVID-19 Mental Health Support Line by calling **1800 632 753**, available 8am – 8pm, 7 days a week, or the Mental Health Peer Support Line by calling 1800 013 755 available 5pm – 11.30pm 7 days a week.

Fact sheets for consumers regarding COVID-19 and clozapine can be found on the Choice and Medication portal <https://www.choiceandmedication.org/sahealth/> along with specific information regarding COVID-19 on the SA Health COVID-19 website [here](#).

For COVID 19 and mental health resources for consumers:

<https://www.chiefpsychiatrist.sa.gov.au/coronavirus-covid-19>

For more information

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