



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2021-2022 **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by **MS ELIZABETH KICKERT MLA** on 10 November 2022:

Reference: Official Visitor Annual Report 2021-2022, p28

In relation to: Official visitor complaints

1. Official visitors have received complaints from detainees that they cannot access the same medication as the community. In what cases can detainees with a specific ailment not access the same medication as someone in the community with the same ailment?
2. The Official visitors have said in their last two annual reports that Justice health is their most regular source of complaints. Can the Minister provide a breakdown of the types of complaints about Justice health they are receiving?

MINISTER EMMA DAVIDSON MLA: The answer to the Member's question is as follows:

1. There are no specific restrictions in the AMC on the provision of any medications available under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for an indicated condition.

Medications with a clear prescribing history documented by a community, inpatient, or interstate health service are typically prescribed by a Justice Health Services (JHS) Medical Officer on admission. The circumstances where a medication may not be continued from the community are where there is no recent prescribing history, where the medication has been prescribed "off-label" in the community and is therefore not indicated for that condition under the PBS or the prescribed medication in the community is no longer clinically indicated. In this case, the person will be offered a treatment option that is indicated for their reported condition.

Some medications are considered with a high degree of caution due to their addictive properties, risk of serious harm if overdosing occurs, or they are known to have a high black-market value within the AMC. However, medications are only restricted in their use where the risks associated with their use in a custodial setting outweigh the clinical benefits when there are safer, alternative treatments available.

Justice Health Services (JHS) are open to review the circumstances around each individual as they arise.

2. A sample of JHS complaints for the period January 2022 to present were reviewed. Of 93 complaints, the major themes represented were as follows:

Major Theme	% Sample	Comments
Review of Eligibility for Opioid Maintenance Treatment (OMT)	19%	Arise in circumstances where a detainee has been found unsuitable for the JHS Buvidal program based on the <i>National Guidelines for Medications Assisted Treatment of Opioid Dependence</i> and is requesting review of this decision. Per JHS policy, detainees are advised that review is offered three months after the initial assessment.
Request for Pain Relief Medication	14%	Typically arise in circumstances where mild pain relief is already prescribed; however, the detainee is requesting stronger medication (i.e., Tramadol, Pregabalin, Lyrica being the most prevalent)
Review of medication administration and eligibility for takeaway packs	10%	Review of medication administration typically arises in the following circumstances: • Dissatisfaction with dosing times – dosing is facilitated at specific times to align with detainee lock-in times. • Dissatisfaction with medication being provided in dissolved form – this occurs in circumstances where a risk of diversion has been identified
Timeframes for outpatient appointments	8%	JHS staff are unable to disclose dates for outpatient appointments to detainees for security reasons, which can give rise to uncertainty regarding appointment timeframes.
General Medical Officer Review	8%	Requests for medical officer reviews typically arise where detainees are dissatisfied with the triaged wait time between submitting a health centre request and undergoing review.
Request to engage with Custodial Mental Health team	8%	Requests to engage with Custodial Mental Health typically arise in circumstances where detainees are not aware of the team's remit and that their concerns are better directed to another service.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature: *Emma Davidson*

Date: 23 December 2022

By the Minister for Justice Health, Ms Emma Davidson MLA