

Dr John Crawshaw the Chief Executive Officer of Statewide Mental Health Services has released the new draft Tasmanian Opioid Pharmacotherapy Policy and Clinical Practice Standards (TOPP).

This important document will ensure that individuals and their families, affected by opioid dependence, receive high quality, contemporary, safe and effective treatment that will allow them to improve their quality of life.

The Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) has undertaken an extensive project to develop a contemporary opioid pharmacotherapy policy and clinical practice guidelines. The development of these guidelines has been a priority due to a number of clinical and population health concerns. These include: high rates of opioid abuse and dependence in Tasmania (in particular prescribed medications); a number of deaths as a result of opioid abuse and dependence (identified by The Coroner) and; inconsistencies in the delivery of opioid pharmacotherapy. The TOPP seeks to address these clinical risks and to enhance the effectiveness and safety of opioid pharmacotherapy in Tasmania.

The TOPP will provide the policy framework and clinical practice standards for the treatment of opioid dependence in Tasmania. Alcohol and drug services and private practitioners offering opioid pharmacotherapy will be required to provide this treatment in a manner consistent with the Tasmanian Opioid Pharmacotherapy Policy and Clinical Practice Standards (2011).

Existing state policy informing the delivery of opioid pharmacotherapy in Tasmania is outdated. It does not adequately address significant developments in the provision of this treatment, for example the use of Buprenorphine for opiate replacement treatment. The National Pharmacotherapy Policy for People Dependent on Opioids (Department of Health and Aging, 2007) currently informs clinical service delivery.

However, the complex treatment needs and significant clinical risks associated with the delivery of opioid pharmacotherapy for a subpopulation where the use of prescribed opioid medication is the predominant drug of choice (rather than heroin), is not adequately addressed. This requires the development of clear clinical guidelines at a jurisdiction level.

In 2007, a major review of Alcohol Tobacco other Drug Services (ATODS) identified the key focus for Tasmania as the need to effectively resource and support the shared care model of opioid pharmacotherapy treatment. The development of more contemporary clinical policy and guidelines and increased access to treatment for opioid dependence were identified as key areas for urgent action. The ATODS Future Service Directions Plan: A five year plan 2008/09-2012/13 (that draws from the 2007 ATODS Review) identified the development of the TOPP and the expansion of access to maintenance opioid pharmacotherapy for opioid dependence as high priority.

External Appraisal and Feedback Process

An External Appraisal and Review Process is being undertaken to seek feedback from key stakeholders. In particular, healthcare professionals, individuals receiving treatment and their families, advocacy groups and independent oversighting bodies involved in the delivery of this program.

The TOPP External Appraisal and Feedback is not a broad and traditional consultation process. As the TOPP incorporates regulatory aspects of clinical service delivery and establishes standards for practice there are a number of aspects of this treatment program that cannot be modified or altered.

For this reason it has been determined that a feedback and appraisal process will be undertaken. Furthermore, as this document informs the delivery of a specific clinical treatment program (and requires a level of clinical knowledge or personal experience), key stakeholders have been identified for participation in the appraisal and feedback process.

TOPP External Appraisal and Review Process Objectives:

- To obtain feedback on the content and breadth of the TOPP (including key policy positions) and identify gaps.
- To obtain feedback on the practical application of the TOPP for service delivery.
- To identify training and resource implications associated with the implementation of the TOPP.
- To create awareness of future directions and changes in the delivery of opioid pharmacotherapy in Tasmania.
- To increase awareness about changes in the public program and the enhanced clinical capacity of the Alcohol and Drug Service.

Feedback on the draft Tasmania Opioid Pharmacotherapy Policy and Clinical Practice Standards is invited including but not limited to the following:

- (a) How the new policy and clinical practice standards will work in practice*
- (b) How the TOPP will impact on health care professionals involved in the delivery of the program and those individuals receiving this treatment*
- (c) Whether the TOPP will help to minimise the risks and ensure the clinical safety of clients receiving Opioid Pharmacotherapy in Tasmania.*
- (d) Whether the new policy will more adequately broaden the current treatment approaches for clients to include a focus on psychosocial and risk and protective factors.*

The closing date for feedback is **Friday, 28 October 2011**

You can provide feedback in the following ways:

Written Feedback: Written submissions can be emailed to adstopp@dhhs.tas.gov.au or posted to:

TOPP External Appraisal and Feedback
Alcohol and Drug Service
13 Mulgrave Street
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Online feedback: You can provide feedback online at www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/mentalhealth/alcohol_and_drug

Feedback in person:

A series of Feedback Forums will be held around the State. Details of the forums are provided below. To express your interest in attending please email adstopp@dhhs.tas.gov.au or phone (03) 6336 5577.

Launceston

Date: Tuesday, 25 October, 2011
Time: 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm
Venue: Launceston Aquatic Centre

Burnie

Date: Wednesday, 26 October, 2011
Time: 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm
Venue: Wellers Inn, Burnie

Hobart

Date: Thursday, 27 October, 2011
Time: 6.00 pm – 8.00 pm
Venue: The Old Woolstore, Hobart

Following the Feedback Process:

The new policy and clinical practice standards present significant changes in the way that opioid pharmacotherapy is delivered in Tasmania. Your feedback is important to ensuring the TOPP will work in practice.

All feedback received during the TOPP External Appraisal and Feedback process will be carefully considered and the draft TOPP will be amended as necessary. The TOPP External Appraisal and Feedback Report will be made available in late November 2011.

The Tasmania Opioid Pharmacotherapy Policy and Clinical Practice Standards will then be launched and implemented in early 2012.

If you have any questions about providing feedback or about any aspect of the TOPP please email adstopp@dhhs.tas.gov.au or call Anita Reimann, Manager Clinical Practice Development and Performance, Alcohol and Drug Services, on (03) 6336 5577.