Health insights

Victoria to roll out real-time prescription monitoring system in 2018

In response to a growing number of deaths and harm resulting from the misuse of prescription medicines in Victoria, the government has announced that it will roll out a real-time prescription monitoring system this year.

Fred IT Group has been appointed to design and develop the 'SafeScript' system, which is intended to provide up-to-date information to prescribers and pharmacists about the prescription histories of their patients.

According to the Victorian government, SafeScript will be available for use in over 1900 medical clinics, 1300 pharmacies and 200 hospitals across the state. The software will enable prescribers to access the prescription history of a presenting patient before deciding whether or not to prescribe a particular drug. When the patient presents to a pharmacy with their script, the pharmacist will also be able to access the software to determine whether or not to dispense the medication.

In providing prescribers and pharmacists with information about who else has been prescribing and dispensing medication to the patient, the hope is that health professionals will be better equipped to identify patients who may be misusing prescription medicines and refer them to appropriate support services if required.

At this stage, not all prescribed medications will be captured by SafeScript. All schedule 8 medicines and all benzodiazepines will be monitored. It is proposed that codeine will also be monitored at some point in the future, but this has been delayed so as to allow time for the community to adjust to the recent rescheduling of over-the-counter codeine products to prescription only.

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With the introduction of a new monitoring system, it will be important for prescribers and pharmacists to stay abreast of whether and how this will impact any existing regulatory obligations to record and report information about patient prescription histories and/or drug seeking behaviour. We understand that the government intends to deliver a package of training and development programs for doctors and pharmacists to assist with the implementation of SafeScript, one aspect of which will focus on regulatory obligations[1],   and we will keep you updated with any key developments in this area.

[1] *SafeScript Initiative Frequently Asked Questions document, available at https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/drugs-and-poisons/safescript*

THIS ARTICLE WAS WRITTEN BY PRINCIPAL KELLIE DELL'ORO AND ASSOCIATE ANNA MARTIN. PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION.

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