

Dear Colleague,

You may be aware of some recent media comments regarding the current ICGP best practice guidelines "Working with Opiate Users in Community Based Primary Care ". There were a number of concerns raised which were addressed when the Best Practice Guidelines Committee was recalled to discuss the matters raised.

We wish to advise you that the ICGP is confident that these Guidelines are evidenced based where possible and are supported by the experience of experts in the field where evidence is not available. We also wish to remind all practitioners that best practice guidelines provide guidance on what is considered best practice; they are not a substitute for clinical judgement.

In view of the concerns raised we wish to add the following addendums to the existing guidelines:

- Page 17 of the guidelines in relation to incrementing doses: in addition to the statement "Increments should be no greater than 10mg at a time" we wish to add that the **"total dose increases should not exceed 20-30mg in one week"**.
- Page 17 of the guidelines under section 2, Commencing and Stabilising on Methadone Treatment the statement "Patients usually stabilise on doses between 60mg to 80mg" should read **"Patients usually stabilise on doses between 60mg to 120mg"**. This is in line with international best practice guidelines. However we recommend that this statement is read in the context of the complete section on commencing doses
- Pg 17 of the guidelines: It is not intended to suggest that > 80mg would be interpreted as a high dose. In the interest of clarity, this statement could be read **"Higher doses of methadone..."** rather than "Higher doses of methadone ( >80mgs)....". Similarly, in the section under Remember on page 18, this sentence should read **"if a patient requires a higher dose and you have limited experience..."** rather than "if a patient requires a dose >80mgs and you have limited experience..."

The current guidelines are now available only through the ICGP website (we are not doing a further print run as the guidelines are currently under review). Please note the addendums above will be added to the on-line version of the Guidelines. Dr Cathal O Sullivan has asked that his name be removed from the Guidelines because of the concerns he raised and this has also been done on the on-line version.

Following the publication of the Opiate Treatment Review in December 2010, new National Guidelines are currently being developed in conjunction with the Irish College of Psychiatrists, the ICGP, the HSE and the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland. The first draft of these Guidelines will be available for review early 2012 and will be circulated to all stakeholders for comment before publication. The nominated ICGP representatives on the MTP National Guidelines group are Dr. Des Crowley and Dr Harkin.

If you have queries with regard to the addendums or content of this letter, please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Substance Misuse Programme through [niamh.killeen@icgp.ie](mailto:niamh.killeen@icgp.ie). The Substance Misuse section of the ICGP website is being updated and will contain details of upcoming CME meetings and conferences.

Thank you for your continued support in the area of substance misuse.

Yours Sincerely

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Director, Substance Misuse Programme

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