



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

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**THE HON DE-ANNE KELLY BE MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER ASSISTING THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE**

ADVICE BRIEF

**THE VETERANS' MEDICINES ADVICE AND
THERAPEUTICS EDUCATION SERVICES
(*VETERANS' MATES*) PROGRAM**



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

National Office

BRIEF FOR MINISTER

ADVICE/INFORMATION

**SUBJECT: THE VETERANS' MEDICINES ADVICE AND THERAPEUTICS
EDUCATION SERVICES (VETERANS' MATES) PROGRAM**

PURPOSE

To brief you on the new quality use of medicines program, Veterans' MATES.

BACKGROUND

The veteran population of Australia constitutes 0.15 per cent of the total Australian population but 15 per cent of those Australians aged 75 years and over. The majority are elderly; many are frail and have multiple chronic medical conditions attributable to their war service and service in the Australian Defence Force. The usage of medicines in the veteran community is high. Research has shown that increasing medicine use and increasing age lead to adverse drug events and hospitalisation through confusion and misadventure with medicines.

The Safety and Quality Council National Report on Patient Safety, July 2002, reports that, 'Medication error is one of the most common causes of unintentional harm in Australia which results in an estimated 140,000 hospital admissions every year'. Further research also indicates that approximately fifty per cent of these admissions are preventable.

Because of their age, frailty and high medicines use, many veterans are at high risk of confusion with management of their medicines and are at high risk of having adverse drug events that can result in their hospitalisation.

The Department has good data on veterans' medicines use, and as veterans' welfare is at the forefront of the Government's support for the veteran community, it is keen to use its resources and promote a program which specifically addresses the potential of medicines misuse in the veteran community.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

The New Veterans' MATES Program

The Department has developed a new quality use of medicines program which aims to improve medicines use in the veteran community. This is the Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services Program, known as Veterans' MATES.

Veterans' MATES uses prescription data to identify veterans who may be at risk of medication misadventure and provides information which may assist in improving their medication management. The program puts veterans' general practitioners at the centre of the program but aims to build a team approach to veterans' medicines use by including veterans themselves, their carers, their community pharmacists, other medical specialists and health practitioners. An important facet of the program is to inform and raise awareness of a veteran's chronic medical conditions and to encourage improved communication between veterans and members of their healthcare team.

Material mailed to GPs will include a covering letter explaining the module, feedback on their veteran patients and information detailing current clinical guidelines. The program also provides educational materials to veterans and their carers to assist in improving medication management at home.

Veterans' MATES will deliver ten modules targeting specific clinical and therapeutic topics over three years. The modules will include material for GPs, pharmacists, other health professionals and veterans.

The Department is in contract with the University of South Australia for delivery of the Veterans' MATES program. The University of South Australia, Quality Use of Medicines and Pharmacy Research Centre, has joined forces with a consortium of other key organisations in the delivery of quality use of medicines programs in Australia. These organisations are the University of Adelaide's Departments of General Practice and Public Health, the National Prescribing Service (NPS), the Drug and Therapeutics Information Service (DATIS), the Australian Medicines Handbook (AMH) and the Repatriation General Hospital Daw Park.

Prior to commencement of the program, briefings were given to the major medical and pharmacy professional bodies as well as their representatives in some states. All participant organisations, (veterans and ex-service organisations, medical and pharmacy) are included in the management of the program. Others may be included in future as the program develops.

Veterans' MATES Modules

To date, the *Veterans' MATES* program has conducted three modules. Each module has involved mailouts to veterans and their most-often-seen medical practitioner. In the third module, community pharmacy is included.

The program has established separate telephone helplines for medical practitioners, veterans and pharmacists who may wish to discuss the content of the program material sent to them. As well, survey forms are included with each module and invite written feedback.

The modules conducted have been:

1. **Home Medicines Reviews.** This module included a mailout to 11,384 medical practitioners and 38,570 veterans. 1,085 (10.6 per cent) of GPs returned response forms

and 68 per cent of these indicated they found the educational material good or very good. The response so far has been good when compared to other response rates from GP surveys. However, the Department wishes to improve the response rate significantly for future Veterans' MATES modules and will seek advice from the Local Medical Officer Advisory Committee (LMOAC) on how the rate can be increased. The response from veterans was considered to be positive. 11,150 (29 per cent) of veterans returned response forms and 86 per cent of these indicated they found the Home Medicines Review brochure good or very good.

2. **Caring for your heart.** This module included a mailout to approximately 6,500 medical practitioners and 13,000 veterans. This module looked at the new evidence for use of beta-blockers in the treatment of heart failure, and encouraged veterans to speak to their doctor about the medicines that they are taking for their heart condition.
3. **Diabetes Triple check, or Caring for your heart if you have Diabetes.** This module is currently being mailed to 8,668 medical practitioners and approximately 17,500 veterans. Module material will be made available to 5,469 community and hospital pharmacies. The message is to optimise the medicines prescribed for veterans with diabetes and for the veteran to understand the need and use of the various medicines they may be taking.

Future modules will address the major issues of optimisation of therapy, avoiding adverse events and regular medicines reviews.

ISSUES

The Veterans' MATES program is a positive initiative addressing the significant potential risk of medicine misuse in the elderly veteran community. Research has shown that fifty percent of adverse drug events resulting in hospitalisation, are preventable. The program involves veterans, GPs, pharmacists and others, working as a team, to address this significant risk.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Minister notes the Veterans' MATES initiative.

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22 June 2005

ATTACHMENTS

- A: Examples of Veterans' MATES material.



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

BRIEF/MINUTE TO MINISTER

TRIM Ref:

ACTION <input type="checkbox"/>	INFORMATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EVENT <input type="checkbox"/>
Critical Date:		
Reason for Critical Date:		

Subject: Veterans' MATES Program (Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutics Education Services)

Recommendation: That the Minister notes the Veterans' MATES initiative.

Sensitive Issues:

Announcements:

Media Issues:

Communication requirements:

INPUT PROVIDED BY:

Defence: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other Agencies: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AWM: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Departmental Contact	Authorised By	Media & Communication Section
Name: Robert s 47F	Name: Ken Douglas s 47F	Name:
Branch: Health Services	Title: Division Head, Health	Signature:
Phone: s 47F	Date: 22 June 2005	Date:

Executive Clearance/ Comments:

s 47F

23/6/05

Minister's comments:

APPROVED NOT APPROVED NOTED

MINISTER'S SIGNATURE DATE / /

Minister's feedback on quality & timeliness:



BRIEF/MINUTE TO MINISTER

TRIM Ref: ..162727.....

ACTION <input type="checkbox"/>	INFORMATION <input type="checkbox"/>	EVENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Critical Date: 25 June 2004		
Reason for Critical Date: To complete papers before the Minister departs for Adelaide for the SA RSL Congress 2-3 July 2004.		

Subject: Provision of the new Prescriber Intervention and Feedback Programme (veterans' MATES)
Recommendation: Minister to launch in Adelaide while attending the SA RSL Congress 2-3 July 2004.
Sensitive Issues:
Announcements:
Media Issues: Media Release to be prepared.

INPUT PROVIDED BY:	
Defence: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other Agencies: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
AWM: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Not Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Departmental Contact	Authorised By	Media & Communication Section
Name: Robert ^{s 47F}	Name: Roger Winzenberg	
Branch: Health Services	Title: Branch Head	
Phone: 16448	Date: 16 June 2004	

Executive Clearance/ ^{s 47F}	
Comments: s 47F 16/6 17/6	

Minister's comments:	
APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> NOT APPROVED <input type="checkbox"/> NOTED <input type="checkbox"/>	
MINISTER'S SIGNATURE	DATE/...../.....

Minister's feedback on quality & timeliness:



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

MINUTE
National Office

MINISTER

**PROVISION OF THE NEW PRESCRIBER INTERVENTION AND
FEEDBACK PROGRAMME (PFP)**

Purpose:

The purpose of this brief is to inform you that the Department of Veterans' Affairs has entered into a contract with the University of South Australia for provision of the new Prescriber Intervention and Feedback Programme (PFP). The new enhanced programme will be called 'Veterans' MATES' (Veterans' Medicines Advice and Therapeutic Education Services).

Background

The former PFP was designed to encourage best practice in prescribing, dispensing and use of veterans' medicines especially in chronic diseases and complex medication regimes. The Programme (as the PFP) has been in progress since 1998.

The contract with the former provider ceased in August 2003. Since then, the Department has undergone a public expression of interest and tender process to identify a suitable organisation to continue delivery of the programme.

The PFP assists Local Medical Officers (LMOs) to meet best-practice standards in prescribing medicines to veterans and war widows. The PFP uses available prescription data to identify veterans who may be at risk of medication misadventure and invites LMOs to assist in improved medication management in the veteran community.

Survey results indicate that the programme is well accepted by LMOs, and the significant majority of those who responded indicate that they have taken action on the advice provided. To date, 18 clinical modules have been completed with the total number of veterans identified for intervention by the programme being 390,692, and the total number of LMOs who provided medical services to these veterans and who received feedback material, being 111,937.

The PFP has delivered an estimated overall saving of up to \$40 million in drug and hospitalisation costs since its inception in 1998.

Replacement Programme

The contract with the University of South Australia for the delivery of the new Veterans' MATES programme, is for 3 years with options to extend by 2 years. It is costed at \$7.2m over 3 years.

The University of South Australia has extensive experience in the use of various research methodologies such as the use of comparison groups, or data, and evaluation of results by health economists. This will provide definitive information on costs and cost-savings to the health care system associated with the Programme interventions. Also, it will result in high quality articles being submitted for publication. Publication will enable dissemination of Programme results and methodologies and raise the profile of DVA and its Quality Use of Medicines initiatives.

The University of South Australia will bring immediate improvement to the Programme through their innovative research of the RPBS data. Ongoing improvement will be through linked analyses with Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), hospital data, and Treatment Account System (TAS) data to strengthen our understanding of the veteran population, their medicine and health care usage.

The University of South Australia will involve other major organisations in the delivery of the new programme. They will subcontract with the National Prescribing Service, Drug and Therapeutics Information Service, Repatriation General Hospital Daw Park, Australian Medicines Handbook and University of Adelaide's Department of General Practice. These bodies are recognised as being the key participants in quality use of medicines programmes in Australia and through this new programme we anticipate innovative approaches, improved coordination and a significant impact on the problem of medication misadventure in the elderly and the veteran community.

The University of South Australia will require approximately six months to establish the service and the first module of the new contract will be expected early in 2005. It is envisaged that the new Programme will deliver a similar level of savings in drug and hospitalisation costs.

Recommendations

It is recommended that you note the establishment of the new Veterans' MATES programme and that you agree to launch the programme in Adelaide while you are there for the SA RSL Congress.

s 47F

Roger Winzenberg
Branch Head
Health Services

16 June 2004



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

BRIEF/MINUTE TO MINISTER

TRIM Ref: 162727

ACTION **INFORMATION** **EVENT**

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Recommendation: Minister to launch in Adelaide while attending the SA RSL Congress 2-3 July 2004. ✓

Sensitive Issues:

Announcements:

Media Issues: Media Release to be prepared.

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AWM: Yes No Not Required

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Branch: Health Services	Title: Branch Head	
Phone: s 47F	Date: 16 June 2004	

Executive Clearance/Comments: s 47F 16/6
17/6

Minister's comments:

APPROVED **NOT APPROVED** **NOTED**

MINISTER'S SIGNATURE **s 47F** **DATE** 22.6.04

Minister's feedback on quality & timeliness: