

Cytotoxic Drugs & Related Waste - Safe Handling in the NSW Public Health System

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Functional Sub group Clinical/ Patient Services - Medical Treatment
Clinical/ Patient Services - Nursing and Midwifery
Clinical/ Patient Services - Pharmaceutical
Personnel/Workforce - Occupational Health & Safety

Summary To advise the NSW public health system of: NSW Health policy in relation to the safe handling of cytotoxic drugs and related waste; agreed WorkCover notification requirements for the use of cyclophosphamide; and the requirement to ensure that the WorkCover NSW Guideline is to be its primary source of guidance when implementing this policy directive.

Replaces Doc. No. Cytotoxic Drugs and Related Waste NSW Health Care Establishments (Guidelines/Competencies - Handling [PD2005_081])

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared, Affiliated Health Organisations - Declared, Public Health System Support Division, NSW Ambulance Service, Public Hospitals

Audience All risk management, OHS, pharmacy, laboratory, nurses, medical, allied, learning/development staff

Distributed to Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Divisions of General Practice, Health Associations Unions, Health Professional Associations and Related Organisations, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health, Public Hospitals, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres, Private Nursing Homes, Tertiary Education Institutes

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Director-General **Status** Active

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

**Cytotoxic Drugs and
Related Waste:**

**Safe Handling in the
NSW Public Health
System**

NSW Health Policy

October 2008

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1.0 About this document

- 1.1 Title** *Safe Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs and Related Waste in the NSW Public Health System: NSW Health Policy*
- 1.2 Responsibility** Workplace Policy, NSW Department of Health
- 1.3 Version** September 2008
- 1.4 Updates and feedback** Feedback is welcome, and should be addressed to the Manager, Workplace Policy, NSW Department of Health.
- 1.5 Related NSW Health policies and guidelines** PD2005_409 *Workplace Health and Safety: Policy and Better Practice Guide*
GL2006_010 *Guidelines for the Safe Use of Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods*
- 1.6 Other related documents** WorkCover NSW publications:
- *Preparing and Managing Cytotoxic Drugs and Related Waste: Risk Management Guide 2008*
 - *Work Involving Use of Carcinogenic Substances: Guidelines for Notification 2002*
- 1.7 Relevant legislation** *NSW Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000*
NSW Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001
- 1.8 Definitions**
- Employer**
For the purposes of this document, means any person authorised to exercise the functions of the employer of staff to which this policy applies.
- NSW Health Service**
Consists of staff employed in all Area Health Services, all statutory health corporations, any declared affiliated health organisations, the Ambulance Service of NSW and Public Health System Support Division.
- NSW Public Health System**
Consists of all Area Health Services, all statutory health corporations, all affiliated health organisations in respect of their recognised services, the Ambulance Service of NSW and the Public Health System Support Division.
- Staff member**
Any person working in any capacity in NSW Health including volunteers, students, visiting medical officers and contractors.

2.0 NSW Health Policy

2.1 Background

Cytotoxic drugs are used to treat a range of medical conditions including cancer, rheumatoid arthritis, multiple sclerosis and autoimmune disorders. A number of adverse health effects have been reported in those who prepare and/or administer cytotoxic drugs, where adequate risk controls to minimise exposure to the drugs have not been put in place.

In June 1995 NSW Health issued a policy and detailed minimum standards for the management of cytotoxic drugs and related waste (PD2005_081 *Guidelines and Training Competencies for the Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs and Related Waste in NSW Health Care Establishments*). The minimum standards were articulated in two WorkCover NSW (WorkCover) publications that were issued with the policy.

In July 2008 WorkCover concluded a significant review and update of the two publications, resulting in a single document titled *Cytotoxic Drugs and Related Waste – Risk Management Guide 2008 (The Guide)*. The review involved engagement of a wide range of subject experts, interest groups, NSW Health staff and other stakeholders, and the draft was subject to extensive public consultation before **The Guide** was finalised.

2.2 Purpose and scope of the policy

The primary purposes of the policy directive are to:

- Rescind and replace PD2005_081
- Specify policy requirements in relation to the safe handling of cytotoxic drugs and related waste
- Advise of agreed notification requirements to WorkCover in relation to the use of cyclophosphamide.

Effective implementation of the policy directive will also assist employers to meet related occupational health and safety (OHS) legislative requirements.

2.3 Who the policy applies to

The policy applies to all staff in the NSW public health system who may be involved in the preparation, transportation or administration of cytotoxic drugs, or the management of related waste, in the hospital and/or community setting.

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2.4 Policy requirements

All employers will ensure that:

- **Adequate risk controls are in place to eliminate, or minimise as far as practicable, staff exposure to cytotoxic drugs when they are being prepared, transported or administered**
- **Adequate risk controls are in place to eliminate, or minimise as far as practicable, staff exposure to cytotoxic drugs during the management of related waste**
- **WorkCover publication ‘Cytotoxic Drugs and Related Waste – Risk Management Guide 2008’ (the Guide) is the primary source of guidance in meeting the above policy requirements**
- **All necessary notifications to WorkCover relating to the use of cyclophosphamide are met, as per the requirements in Section 2.5 of this policy directive.**

All staff will:

- **Co-operate with the employer in meeting these policy requirements**
- **Follow all safe handling procedures to minimise exposure to cytotoxic drugs**
- **Attend related training as required**
- **Use any related personal protective or other equipment provided to minimise the risk of exposure to cytotoxic drugs.**

Copies of the Guide are available at:

<http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/Publications/OHS/Training/pages/CytotoxicDrugsandRelatedWasteRiskManagementGuide.aspx>

This policy directive should also be read in conjunction with:

- PD2005_409 *Workplace Health and Safety: Policy and Better Practice Guide*
- GL2006_010 *Guidelines for the Safe Use of Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods.*

2.5 WorkCover notification: Use of cyclophosphamide

Clauses 158 and 345 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation 2001 (the Regulation) require that WorkCover be notified of any work that involves the therapeutic use of cyclophosphamide in hospitals. Each notification covers all individual instances of use of cyclophosphamide within that workplace for five years from the date of notification.

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The notification is workplace specific. For example, the preparation, transport and use of cyclophosphamide within a particular hospital site or campus would be covered under that hospital's notification. However, if, for example, the hospital pharmacy is located on a different site or campus to the department it is supplying, the pharmacy would need to be covered by its own notification.

Therefore, each workplace (as advised above) where cyclophosphamide is, or may be, prepared, reconstituted, transported or administered from, must have a current WorkCover notification, and must have a system in place for ensuring that re-notification takes place at the appropriate times.

More detailed information regarding notification requirements, and copies of the Notification Forms for downloading can be accessed via the following link [Work Involving Use of Carcinogenic Substances: Guidelines for Notification](#).

Internal advice on notification requirements and status can be obtained from Area Health Service Risk Managers.

Professor Debora Picone AM
Director-General