

**Issue date**

29 November 2022

**Distributed to:**

Chief Executives  
 Directors of Clinical Governance  
 Director, Regulation and Compliance Unit

**Action required by:**

Chief Executives  
 Directors of Clinical Governance

**We recommend you also inform:**

Directors, Managers and Staff of:

- Palliative Care
- Pain Services
- Renal & Dialysis
- Oncology
- Emergency
- Alcohol and Other Drugs Services

Drug and Therapeutics Committees

Other relevant clinicians, departments and committees.

**Expert Reference Group****Content reviewed by:**

Medication Safety Expert Advisory Committee

**Representatives from:**

ACI Palliative Care and End of Life Network  
 ACI Renal Network  
 ACI Pain Management Network

**Clinical Excellence Commission**

Tel: 02 9269 5500

[Email](#)

[Internet](#)

[Intranet](#)

**Review date**

November 2023

## Discontinuation of Journista® (HYDROMORPHONE hydrochloride) modified release tablets in Australia

**Situation**

All strengths of Journista (HYDROMORPHONE hydrochloride) modified release tablets will be discontinued from **30 April 2023**. Currently there are no other brands of modified release HYDROMORPHONE tablets listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods (ARTG). HYDROMORPHONE immediate-release oral liquid (Dilaudid) was discontinued in April 2021. Immediate release tablet and injectable formulations continue to be available.

**Background**

HYDROMORPHONE is a potent opioid (**5 to 7 times more potent than morphine**) used to treat severe, acute or chronic pain in patients for whom other treatment options have failed, are contraindicated, not tolerated or otherwise inappropriate to provide sufficient management of pain.

**Assessment**

As direct alternatives to Journista are not available, patients currently prescribed Journista will need to be switched to an alternative medication(s). Switching patients between opioids can be complex, and care must be taken to avoid patient harm (overdose) or inadequate pain control (underdose).

**Recommendations**

- Avoid initiating any further patients on Journista.
- Clinicians and governance committees should review local protocols and guidelines, and remove reference to the availability of modified release HYDROMORPHONE tablets.
- Clinicians should review all patients currently being treated with Journista as soon as possible, and begin discussions with patients/carers about the need to switch to alternative medications for ongoing management of pain. Clinicians should utilise this opportunity to review their patient's ongoing requirements for opioids.
- To ensure the most appropriate alternative is selected, clinicians should carefully consider individual patient factors (e.g., renal function), and seek expert advice if required.
- Opioid conversion tools (e.g., [ANZCA Opioid Calculator](#), [eviQ Conversion Calculator](#)) should be used to guide switching and to determine a suitable starting dose. Specialist advice should be sought if there is limited experience with opioid conversions.
  - Alternative opioids should be commenced at a lower dose than the equianalgesic dose and then titrated to effect.
  - Close monitoring is required until the patient is stabilised on their alternative treatment regimen.
  - Resources for chronic pain (for clinicians and consumers) developed by the ACI Pain Management Network can be found [here](#).
- Clearly communicate changes to patient's medications in medical records, and ensure that this is handed over appropriately especially at transitions of care. Provide written information to patients including dosing and advice on management of adverse effects (see [CEC factsheet](#)).
- Governance committees should liaise with local eMeds/ICT teams to review and modify available order sentences in eMM systems.

PTO

**Required actions for the Local Health Districts/Networks**

1. Distribute this Safety Notice to all relevant clinicians and clinical departments where Journista is prescribed, stored and administered, and include this Safety Notice in relevant handovers and safety huddles.
2. Undertake a local risk assessment, and develop strategies to manage the discontinuation of Journista which integrate the recommendations provided in this Safety Notice.
3. Ensure a system is in place to document actions taken in response to this Safety Notice.
4. Confirm receipt and distribution of this Safety Notice within **72 hours** to:

[CEC-MedicationSafety@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:CEC-MedicationSafety@health.nsw.gov.au)

Obsolete