

GP Advisory Committee (GPAC) in Focus

Highlights – 8 May Meeting

Opioid substitution therapy (OST) in the community: addressing the reduced access

Discussion led by Olga Christine, NBMPHN Manager Alcohol and Other Drugs Program

Member feedback highlighted barriers and made suggestions to support NBM general practitioners to engage in OST prescribing and improve access to community based OST treatment.

GP feedback included:

- That GP practices often have limited capacity to take on new patients
- Absence of appropriate Medicare items for OST in general practice
- The perceived stigma associated with a general practice becoming known as a 'prescribing practice' even if they only support a small number of OST patients.

Suggestions to support GPs included:

- For GPs experienced with OST to support training of other GPs
- Supporting general practices to consider OST for patients known to them or who are family members of patients
- To work more closely with GPs who indicate an interest in OST prescribing, and to offer OST education to early career GPs.
- Progress consideration of shared care arrangements within general practices as well as with support from the LHD.

Possible incentives will need to acknowledge that there are unique additional demands when treating OST patients. Incentives should look at the supporting the practice not just the GP.

NBMPHN is developing strategies to support general practice in OST prescribing and drug and alcohol services more broadly. Please contact Olga Christine at NBMPHN on 4708 8100 for more information.