

## **Vic TAG QUM group endorses the use of Green Bags for patient's own medication and Red Bags for inpatient only medication.**

In an effort to standardise practice across the state, it was agreed that each colour bag should have only one purpose otherwise there could be confusion.

The colour coding assists staff in recognising the function of each bag

- Green is for Go; these bags may go home with the patient
- Red is for stop: these bags must remain in hospital

### **Green Bags**

It is safer if patients bring their medication with them into hospital because the physical presence of medications is a memory trigger for patients and helped doctors and pharmacists immensely to establish a medication history.

Green medication bags are now available for use by paramedics across Victoria and are being encouraged to transport patient's own medications (POM) with them into hospital. A study at the Austin Hospital found that when POM were brought to the ED by paramedics, significantly fewer errors occurred on admission medication charts<sup>1</sup>.

During inpatient day the green "patient's own medication" bags are to be used for retaining all of the patient's pre-admission medication. Using these bags should help to ensure that medication doesn't get misplaced when patients are transferred between inpatient areas within the hospital and subsequently upon discharge.

When patients go home, the **Green** bag can "**Go**" with them, but it is important that the ward pharmacist checks the contents of the bag first – medications enclosed may have been ceased or had doses changed, and may therefore need to be removed, relabelled and/or replaced.

### **Red Bags**

The red "ward transfer - inpatient medication" bags are to be used for medication, which is transferred with the patient within the hospital. This medication may include injections and "as required" medication. This is especially important for less common drugs, but even some of our more common drugs may not be stocked in other areas. Sending them with the patient ensures they have a continued supply of medication: this avoids delaying treatment, double-dispensing, and unnecessary ordering of expensive items.

**Red** is for "**Stop**": these bags must not leave the hospital. Medications for inpatient use are not labelled with all the details necessary for legal supply outside the hospital setting (e.g. patients name, directions, cautionary & advisory labels, and the name of the prescriber).

The VicTAG QUM group recently collaborated on an improved standardised design of both bags to be used across Victoria. It was agreed that clear bags be used to return discontinued medications (POM brought into hospital by patients, but discontinued whilst in hospital). These may be returned to the patient if they request, but should usually be discarded by Pharmacy.

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<sup>1</sup> Esther W Chan, Simone E Taylor, Jennifer L Marriott and Bill Barger, Bringing patients' own medications into an emergency department by ambulance: effect on prescribing accuracy when these patients are admitted to hospital, *MJA*, 2009; 191: 374-377.

The new Reg/Green bags are available from Sterling Fildes

| Product Code | Description   | Size      | Price per box of 500 |
|--------------|---|-----------|----------------------|
| MS 050       | Green "Patient's Own Medication" resealable bag           | 280x390mm | \$118.00 + GST       |
| MS 070       | Red "Ward Transfer – Inpatient Medication" resealable bag | 280x390mm | \$118.00 + GST       |

For further information about red and green bags, log-in to the members' section and look under Med Safety/QUM group. Hospital guidelines and printers proofs are available in the 'systems improvements' folder.

