

**Submission  
No 100**

## **INQUIRY INTO OFF-PROTOCOL PRESCRIBING OF CHEMOTHERAPY IN NSW**

**Name:** Macquarie University Hospital

**Date received:** 27 October 2016

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Partially  
Confidential

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25 October 2016

NSW Upper House Chemotherapy Inquiry Select Committee  
By Email: [chemotherapyinquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au](mailto:chemotherapyinquiry@parliament.nsw.gov.au)

To Whom It May Concern

**Re: Legislative Council Inquiry into off-protocol prescribing of chemotherapy in NSW**

I refer to the above Inquiry established by a select committee of the Legislative Council.

In circumstances where Macquarie University Hospital (**MUH**) found that 21 patients were affected by off-protocol prescribing of chemotherapy I am pleased to provide a submission to the select committee for the purposes of its Inquiry.

MUH is Australia's first and only private not-for-profit teaching hospital on a university campus. MUH is part of Macquarie University Health Sciences Centre (MQ Health), Australia's first fully integrated academic health science centre under a university's leadership.

Please find below MUH's submission in accordance with the Inquiry's Terms of Reference.

**(a) the efficacy of electronic prescribing systems, and their capacity to stop or limit off-protocol prescribing of chemotherapy**

Since 2010 MUH has utilised an electronic medical record (EMR) that includes an electronic prescribing system. In May 2015 MUH upgraded its system and at present is the only hospital in Australia to utilise a fully integrated, end to end, EMR.

At MUH the EMR includes an alert function for Schedule 8 drugs. When prescribing a Schedule 8 drug an alert appears on the screen and the prescriber must actively override the alert to continue prescribing. The alerts also appear in the EMR for persons dispensing and administering the drug.

By adopting an approach where alerts appear on screen and personnel are required to take action if an alert appears, there is far less opportunity for medication errors to occur.

It is my view that an electronic prescribing system does have the capacity to limit off-protocol prescribing of chemotherapy. At present MUH has requested our software provider to assist in the development of a chemotherapy module in its EMR and plans to test this function over the next 12 months. MUH intends to duplicate the alert system that exists for Schedule 8 drugs and introduce a new alert for chemotherapy drugs. It is anticipated that the alerts will incorporate references to the EviQ guidelines, and prompt EMR users to calculate the chemotherapy dose in accordance with those guidelines.

- (b) the value of a potential new patient information sheet on dose adjustment for patients and caregivers information; and**
- (c) the process and systems around informed consent for all medical interventions, including chemotherapy**

MUH fully supports a process where each patient is provided with detailed information regarding the chemotherapy drug that is intended to be prescribed for them. This process should include the Doctor having an open and frank discussion with the patient regarding the appropriateness of the dose and details the EviQ guidelines. It is my view that patients would also benefit a great deal if they were to receive a comprehensive information sheet regarding their chemotherapy with an explanation on dose adjustment.

- (d) The capacity of the NSW Health system to have all notifiable cancer patients in New South Wales overseen by a Multidisciplinary Cancer Care Team, and if this may prevent off-protocol prescribing,**

MUH supports a system where all notifiable cancer patients in New South Wales are overseen by a Multidisciplinary Cancer Care Team. MUH has the capacity to support such a system as it already has in place a multidisciplinary team model of care for most patients. All Accredited Practitioners at MUH must agree to practice as part of a multidisciplinary team, where a patient's circumstances require it. It is possible that a multidisciplinary team approach would prevent, or at least reduce, off-protocol prescribing, as it would be expected that all members of that team would be aware of any issues with the prescribed dose of chemotherapy and could raise their concerns with the prescribing doctor.

Should you require any further information from me, please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours faithfully

**Carol Bryant**  
Chief Executive Officer