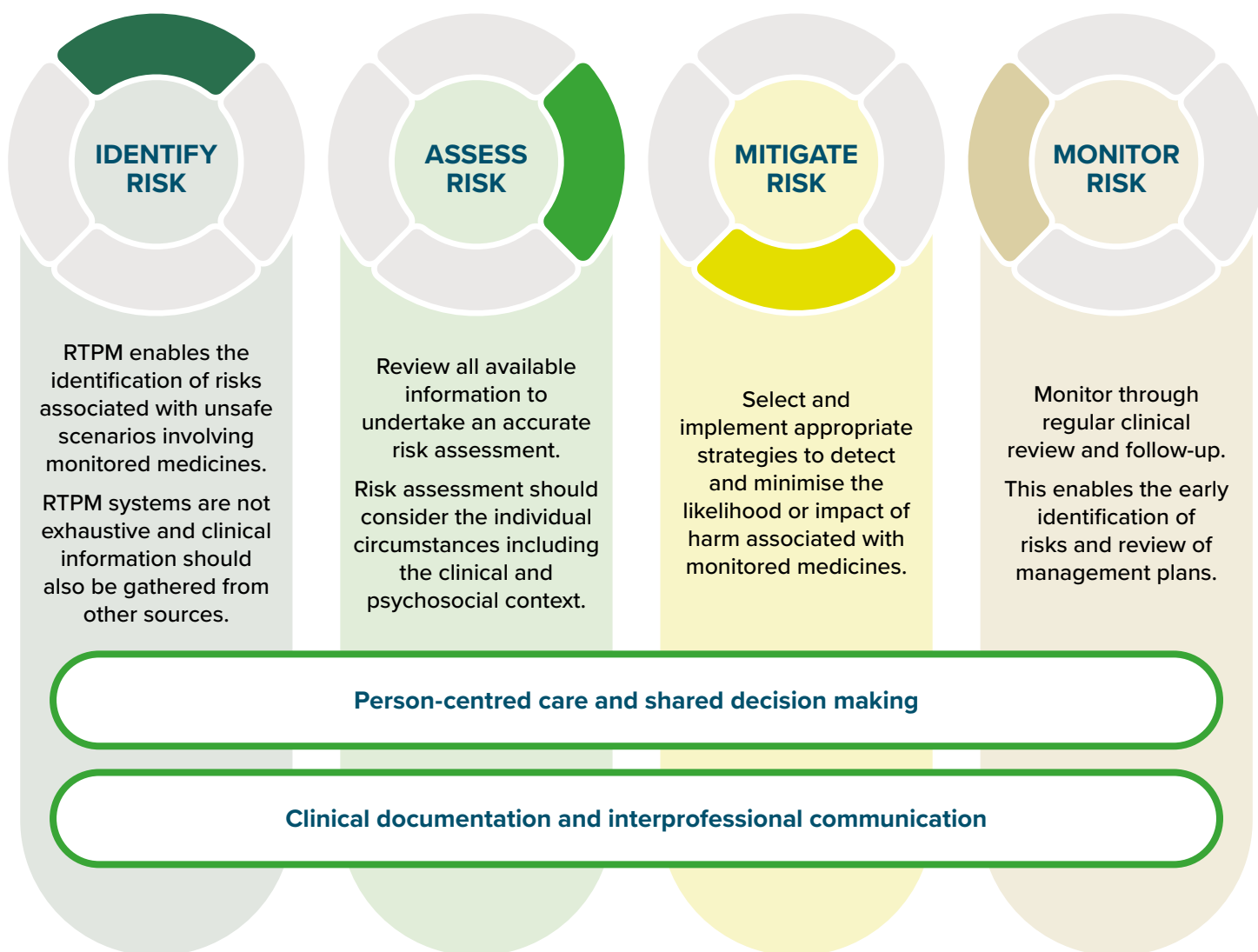


Real-time prescription monitoring: clinical risk management

Real-time prescription monitoring (RTPM) supports the safe use of monitored medicines by providing important information for clinical decision-making. Information within RTPM should be considered alongside other clinical assessments and information sources using a risk management process.

Risk management process using RTPM





Risk identification

Prescribers and pharmacists should apply the clinical practice principles when accessing a patient's RTPM record. Clinical judgement is required to consider risks identified from RTPM alongside other clinical information and contextual factors.



Examples of risks identified through RTPM:

- Multiple prescribers or pharmacies
- High-risk combinations of medicines (e.g. opioid and benzodiazepine)
- High doses of monitored medicines
- Patterns of prescribing or dispensing that may indicate increased usage of monitored medicine
- Recent prescribing or dispensing episode for same or similar high-risk medicine

Examples of risks identified through other sources:

- Substance use disorders
- Chronic diseases such as COPD, asthma, obstructive sleep apnoea
- Co-administration with other medicines or substances not captured in RTPM
- Continued use of monitored medicines despite limited clinical response



Risk assessment

Risk assessment is a process to determine the likelihood and severity of a potential outcome following identification of a risk.

Questions that could be considered in a risk assessment



For prescribers

- Is the monitored medicine and/or dose clinically appropriate?
- Is there a risk of patient harm if the monitored medicine is ceased abruptly or tapered too quickly?
- Is the monitored medicine used or likely to be used (knowingly or unknowingly) in an unsafe manner?
- Is there a plan for ongoing monitoring and review?



For pharmacists

- Is the monitored medicine prescribed in line with current guidelines?
- Is the dose safe and appropriate?
- Has this medicine been used before?
- What other medicines are being taken (including non-prescription products)?
- Are there other factors that increase risk of harm?

Examples of validated tools to support risk assessment

- [Opioid Risk Tool](#)
- [STOPP/START](#) – Screening tools for medicines use in older adults
- [Opioid calculator](#) (oMEDD)
- [HEADS](#) – Psychosocial assessment for young people



Risk mitigation

The type of risk mitigation strategies adopted will vary based on the presenting patient, type of medicine and the risk identified. A combination of strategies may be required.

Examples of risk mitigation strategies



For prescribers

- Prescribe a smaller quantity, lower dose or an alternative medicine
- Develop a shared action plan for dose tapering or deprescribing
- Prepare a treatment agreement with the patient to clearly outline prescribing boundaries and expectations
- Staged supply arrangements through pharmacy
- Referral to specialist medical care and support services



For pharmacists

- Consider providing a limited supply (where supported by legislation)
- Staged supply arrangements as directed by prescriber
- Use of a dose administration aid
- Refer for a comprehensive home medicines review (HMR)
- Consider provision of naloxone with opioids
- Provide patient information on safe use of the monitored medicine



Risk monitoring

The use of monitored medicines should be reviewed regularly as part of good prescribing practice. Monitored medicines should also be reviewed clinically at each dispensing encounter to identify any new risks.

- High-risk medicines including monitored medicines should not be initiated without a clearly documented management plan with follow-up
- Ongoing monitoring and management plans should be made available in a patient's My Health Record wherever possible
- Prescribers and pharmacists should maintain good documentation that describes the rationale for clinical decision-making including
 - clinical assessments
 - attempts to contact other healthcare providers
 - information provided to patient to support continuity of care

Supporting resources

- RACGP guidelines: [Prescribing drugs of dependence in general practice](#)

More information



For more information on RTPM, please visit the [Commission's webpage](#).