

# Antimicrobial Stewardship Clinical Care Standard FAQs

The Antimicrobial Stewardship Clinical Care Standard aims to ensure that every use of an antibiotic is targeted and appropriate, with the dual aims of effectively treating patients, while limiting the rise of resistant bacteria that could harm the whole community.

## What is Antimicrobial Stewardship?

Antimicrobial stewardship (AMS) is a range of activities to ensure antibiotics are used safely and effectively.

The AMS Clinical Care Standard aims to ensure that every use of an antibiotic is targeted and appropriate, with the dual aims of effectively treating patients, while limiting the rise of resistant bacteria that could harm the whole community.

It aims to ensure that a patient with a bacterial infection receives optimal treatment with antibiotics. 'Optimal treatment' means that patients are treated with the right antibiotic to treat their condition, the right dose, by the right route, at the right time and for the right duration based on accurate assessment and timely review.

## Why is Antimicrobial Stewardship important?

Antibiotic resistance threatens the effective prevention and treatment of an ever-increasing range of infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotic resistance is when bacteria changes and antibiotics fail. Resistance is not confined to specific types of treatments or conditions; every single use of antibiotics potentially encourages bacterial resistance, even when use is entirely appropriate.

Despite antibiotics being one of the most frequently prescribed hospital medicines, up to 50 per cent of antibiotics prescribed in Australian hospitals are considered inappropriate, thus increasing antibiotic resistance.

This is happening right now thus appropriate prescribing of antibiotics can help reduce the emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.

## What does the AMS Clinical Care Standard focus on?

The AMS Clinical Care Standard provides advice to clinicians on key health care elements:

- Management of sepsis and other life-threatening conditions
- Targeted prescribing: guidelines, appropriate microbiology tests and patient review
- Provision of surgical antibiotic prophylaxis
- Facilitating the provision of patient-centred care, and consumer information.

## How was the AMS Clinical Care Standard developed?

In developing the Clinical Care Standards, the Commission uses the most up-to-date clinical guidelines and standards, information about gaps between evidence and practice, the professional expertise of clinicians and researchers, and consideration of issues important to consumers.

A Topic Working Group was established to assist in the development of the AMS Clinical Care Standard. Further information about this group is available on the Commission's website.

### **What does the AMS Clinical Care Standard mean for clinicians?**

Clinicians can address efforts to stop antimicrobial resistance by:

- Ensuring that patients receive the right antibiotic for the bacterial condition – in some cases no antibiotic at all. This includes microbiology testing where feasible prior to commencing treatment
- Prescribing antibiotics in accordance with the *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic* or local formulary
- Providing information to the patient on how long to take the antibiotic treatment and its potential side effects
- Reviewing the patient's antibiotic treatment to determine if continuation or a different type(s) of antibiotic is needed.

### **What does the AMS Clinical Care Standard mean for health services?**

This Clinical Care Standard sets out the components of care that health services can use to guide practice and monitor improvement in their hospitals and other services where the AMS Clinical Care Standard is applicable.

### **How will I know if the AMS Clinical Care Standard works?**

A set of suggested indicators have been developed to assist with local implementation of the AMS Clinical Care Standard. They can be used by health services to monitor the implementation of each quality statement, and support improvement as needed.

### **Is the use of the indicators compulsory?**

Monitoring quality of care is an effective way of identifying areas that require improvement. Organisations are likely to have mechanisms in place that monitor the care provided. The suggested indicators are not compulsory. However, if additional measures are needed then the suggested indicators can be used.

### **What is the difference between the Clinical Care Standards and National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards?**

The Clinical Care Standards provide guidance on appropriate care (e.g. a treatment, process or procedure) that a patient should receive for a specific clinical condition. The NSQHS Standards set out the minimum performance expectations, processes and structures that should be in place for a health service (e.g. hospitals, aged-care services, day surgeries, etc.) to provide safe and high quality care.

Relevant NSQHS Standards that relate to the AMS Clinical Care Standard include the overarching Standards 1 and 2, and Standard 3:

- Standard 1: Governance for Safety and Quality
- Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers
- Standard 3: Preventing and Controlling Healthcare Associated Infections, strengthening hygiene and infection prevention and control measures

- Standard 6: Clinical Handover.

Used together, the Clinical Care Standards and the NSQHS Standards aim to ensure people will receive safe, high quality appropriate care.

### **Is the AMS Clinical Care Standard only for use in hospitals?**

The AMS Clinical Care Standard has been developed for use in a variety of healthcare settings, including hospital, general practice and residential aged-care.

### **Why does the AMS Clinical Care Standard only relate to bacteria? What about fungus and viruses?**

The focus is on improving appropriate prescribing of antibiotics, as the inappropriate use of antibiotics represents the target problem in clinical practice, not only in hospitals and healthcare services, but also in the community. Many of the principles developed for bacteria will also apply to fungal and viral infections.

### **One of the recommendations is to undertake microbiology testing before starting antibiotics. Is the expectation to test everybody in general practice?**

In hospitals, microbiology testing routinely occurs before the administration of antibiotic treatment, but it is also highly desirable in general practice and residential aged-care settings. This quality statement aims to encourage all clinicians to undertake microbiology testing whenever possible or indicated.

### **The AMS Clinical Care Standard recommends the use of the *Therapeutic Guidelines*. How can I access these?**

The use of the *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic* or local formulary is important as it guides the provision of the right antibiotic treatment (i.e. ensuring that the right drug, dose, route and duration of therapy is chosen).

The *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotic* should be available in all public hospitals, and from the *Therapeutic Guidelines* website.

### **What are the next steps?**

The Commission will support, coordinate and advocate for implementation of the Clinical Care Standards at a national level. At a hospital level, these activities will occur through the Commission's existing Antimicrobial Stewardship initiatives. Other activities will focus on systems approaches and integration with the work of jurisdictions and other bodies and organisations including peak bodies. The Clinical Care Standards will also seek to assist consumers in having access to information that will assist in making decisions about their care together with their clinicians.

The Commission is establishing a nationally integrated surveillance system to support Antimicrobial Resistance and Antimicrobial Usage. This will be achieved by the Commission continuing to work with the jurisdictions and the private sector, progressively demonstrating the benefits of a cohesive and integrated system.

### **How to get involved?**

To hear more about the Clinical Care Standards, you can sign up to the Commission Twitter account



@ACSQHC or to the Commission's newsletters.

You can also contact the Clinical Care Standards team at [ccs@safetyandquality.gov.au](mailto:ccs@safetyandquality.gov.au)

More information on the Clinical Care Standards program is available from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care website at [www.safetyandquality.gov.au/ccs](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/ccs)