

MEMORANDUM

To Australian and New Zealand Intensive Care Society (ANZICS) – New Zealand Branch
New Zealand Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Directors
College of Intensive Care Medicine Australia and New Zealand (CICM) – New Zealand National Committee
New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists (NZSA)
Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists (ANZCA) – New Zealand National Committee

CC District Health Board (DHB) Chief Medical Officers
DHB Chief Pharmacists
New Zealand College of Critical Care Nurses (NZCCCN)
NZ Anaesthetic Technicians Society (NZATS)
PHARMAC's ad hoc Critical Care Advisory Group (CCAG)

From Ken Clark, Medical Director, PHARMAC

Subject Conserving supplies of propofol in the context of COVID-19

Date 22 April 2020

Dear colleagues,

I hope this finds you well in these extraordinary times.

I am writing to you to ask you to share with your members and clinical staff the current situation regarding propofol and to request that you support a reduction in demand of this medicine where clinically appropriate.

In summary:

- Propofol is subject to significant supply constraints, both locally and internationally
- With the anticipated changes in clinical practice as New Zealand moves down alert levels, including an increase in elective procedures, we consider it likely that propofol usage in New Zealand will increase
- PHARMAC has received clinical advice that practice changes may be possible, that would help conserve available propofol stock without affecting patient outcomes

- We ask that, if it is possible and appropriate to do so, you communicate this challenge amongst your networks, and provide guidance regarding clinically appropriate methods to conserve propofol stock.

Background regarding propofol supply

As you may be aware, the suppliers of propofol have had challenges with continuity of supply recently. As a result of COVID-19, we are also aware of broader international supply demand for propofol which has made securing stock challenging for New Zealand.

COVID-19 is likely to have global impacts on medicine manufacture and supply chains for the remainder of 2020 and potentially beyond, and we are expecting that propofol supply issues may continue as a result. We continue to work with all our suppliers to minimise any impacts on the supply chain but wanted to ensure you were aware of our concerns.

PHARMAC is actively working with the contracted supplier of propofol, as well as other suppliers, to ensure we continue receiving stock of this vital medicine.

Clinical advice received

On 12 April 2020, PHARMAC held a videoconference with an ad hoc clinical advisory group, that we recently established, made up of national experts from the fields of intensive care medicine, anaesthesia, general medicine, respiratory medicine, nursing and pharmacy. This group has been called the Critical Care Advisory Group (CCAG). Details of membership, and a record of its advice will be posted on the PHARMAC website as soon as possible.

The CCAG reinforced feedback we have received from the health sector that there may be some options for practice changes that would reduce demand for propofol and thereby extend the usage of stock available in New Zealand. Given the likelihood of many more elective procedures being conducted over coming weeks as we move down through national COVID-19 alert levels, we consider that demand management will likely become more critical.

We are aware that internationally some clinical groups have developed consensus statements, guidelines or recommendations to assist with managing propofol demand. For example, the UK approach can be found here: <https://icmanaesthesiacovid-19.org/drug-demand-supply-guidance>.

As New Zealand's key professional bodies and clinical leaders in Intensive Care and in Anaesthesia, we are asking you to provide guidance to your colleagues and staff on managing use of propofol over the coming months.

PHARMAC will continue to work with suppliers to ensure New Zealand can access stock of propofol, but in the meantime I want to thank you in advance for any advice and support you are able to provide to manage usage.

We will continue to update our [website](#) with information as the situation evolves. Please contact me via email ken.clark@pharmac.govt.nz if you have any specific questions or concerns.



Acting Medical Director/SLT