



# National Prescribing Curriculum News

Supporting the development of prescribing skills through interactive online modules

The National Prescribing Curriculum (NPC) for senior medical students is a National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) online curriculum. It is based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) Guide to Good Prescribing and refers to the Australian Medicines Handbook and Therapeutic Guidelines.



## NPC adds new dimensions

As pharmacy and nursing programs have also begun using the National Prescribing Curriculum (NPC) modules, the module suites have been renamed: **Student Prescribing Modules** and **Junior Practitioner Prescribing Modules**.

And, later this year, several new modules will be added to the NPC website.

Trigeminal neuralgia and periodontal abscess, diabetes-related oral lichen planus, and post-extraction osteomyelitis have been chosen as the content for the new modules. As people experiencing these conditions might first present to a dentist, a general practitioner, or to casualty, the new module content will be applicable to both medical and dental students.

Staff at the University of Western Australia (UWA), School of Medicine and Pharmacology, are developing the new modules.

Other new modules are also being planned, including youth health (with a focus on mental health), prophylactic anti-coagulation, anti-coagulation in DVT, and dementia monitoring. These should become available during the 2008 academic year.

Currently, existing NPC modules are being used to varying degrees by all senior medical students.



National Prescribing Service Limited



## NPS charts new course

NPS has developed an online training module to support the implementation of the National In-patient Medication Chart.

The online training was developed in partnership with the NSW Therapeutic Advisory Group and guides users through each section of the medication chart, promoting safe prescribing practices and allowing self assessment.

The module is available at <http://nimc.nps.org.au/elearning/log/login.asp>.

First time users will need to register, creating their own username and password. NPS can give local administration access to academic staff, which allows tracking of local users. Please contact Meg Stuart ([mstuart@nps.org.au](mailto:mstuart@nps.org.au)).



## Quiz enhances learning

Formative assessment quizzes are gradually being introduced into National Prescribing Curriculum (NPC) modules.

Some modules, such as COPD, pain and vomiting, and polypharmacy, already contain the new assessment. By the end of 2007 all modules will include the assessment.

The assessment comprises five multiple choice questions, with students receiving feedback about each choice and general feedback about the question content after completing the quiz.

In the long term, NPS plans to release a clinical summary of each module conditional on successful completion of the formative quiz.

NPS is still recruiting authors to write small banks of questions. If you are interested in writing quiz questions please contact Meg Stuart ([mstuart@nps.org.au](mailto:mstuart@nps.org.au)).

## QUM goes undergrad

A Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) online training module, suitable for inclusion in undergraduate health science programs, is now available through NPS.

The module covers QUM principles and their application in clinical care, including the roles of various QUM players. Student learning is resource and activity based, with users engaging in online discussion forums.

To review this online module for possible inclusion in your program, contact Karen Baskett ([kbaskett@nps.org.au](mailto:kbaskett@nps.org.au)).

## NPS fosters QUM collaboration

NPS is supporting the development of several inter-professional Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) learning modules.

The University of Canberra, University of Queensland and University of South Australia are developing the modules, which will be available for review during semester two this year.

# Cyber case studies improve script writing

Using National Prescribing Curriculum (NPC) online case studies combined with formal in-house university assessments has improved medical students' prescription writing skills.

This combined approach was in response to complaints from hospital pharmacists about University of Western Australia (UWA) first year medical interns lacking prescription writing skills.

By Ken Ilett and David Joyce from the Pharmacology and Anaesthesiology Unit at the University of Western Australia (UWA).

## Old school methods

Traditionally, the UWA Pharmacology Unit taught prescription writing theory to fourth year medical students in clinical pharmacology and therapeutics lectures.

However, there was just one lecture on prescription writing, covering drugs and poisons scheduling, prescription writing legislation and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Prescription writing practice was left until later when students were in their sixth year and was taught largely on wards by medicine and surgery practitioners.

To improve this approach to prescription writing education and training, an internal UWA review led to NPC case studies being included in UWA teaching. However, attempts over two years to get students to do one or two of the cases voluntarily was unsuccessful because the material was not examinable.

## New integrated learning

To overcome low student participation, in 2005, UWA introduced into its curriculum six NPC online case studies – Peptic Ulcer, Polypharmacy, Hypertension, Anticoagulants, Anticonvulsants, and Pain and Vomiting – and a formal assessment.

Medicine and pharmacology students were required to complete each online case study over a two week period, which corresponded approximately with formal therapeutics lectures.

Within the same period they were also required to complete an on-line UWA Faculty of Medicine intranet summative assessment.

An additional lecture was added to the teaching schedule to demonstrate the use of the NPC website and explain how and when the UWA on-line assessment was to be completed.

## Questions and answers

The UWA assessment comprised multiple choice questions about each of the six NPC case studies and included questions on therapeutics, pharmacology and prescribing practice. A PBS prescription writing exercise for a patient with similar medical problems to those in each of the NPC case studies was also part of the assessment.

Each case study assessment was allocated 3% of the total course mark, representing 18% of the overall mark.

## Mark of distinction

In response to the new educational approach, student participation in NPC online case studies and UWA assessments has been very high and the marks achieved generally very pleasing.

An evaluation of the new approach at the end of the first year revealed that 85% of students rated the approach positively.

The UWA has found that teaching prescription writing skills using case studies has been rewarding for students and teachers. However, formal assessment is necessary to ensure student participation.

## National Prescribing Service

The National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) is an independent, non-profit organisation for Quality Use of Medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

### Quality use of medicines (QUM)

- Selecting management options wisely.
- Choosing suitable medicines if a medicine is considered necessary.
- Using medicines safely and effectively.

NPS education and information services are used when decisions about medicines are made. NPS provides accurate, balanced, evidence-based information and services to help people choose if, when and how to use medicines to improve their health and well-being.

### NPS education and training

NPS provides opportunities for health professionals to participate in case studies and clinical audits, enabling professionals to reflect on their own practice and explore and apply best practice therapeutic guidelines.

Case studies and clinical audits are available in hard copy or online at [www.nps.org.au/healthpro](http://www.nps.org.au/healthpro)

### NPS information for health professionals

All NPS information, including the following publications and advice, are free:

- **Australian Prescriber** provides independent reviews of therapeutics, [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com)
- **NPS News** provides the latest updates on therapeutic topics, [www.nps.org.au/healthpro](http://www.nps.org.au/healthpro)
- **NPS RADAR** provides timely and independent information to prescribers and consumers on new and revised listings to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Schedule, [www.npsradar.org.au](http://www.npsradar.org.au)
- **NPS Therapeutic Advice and Information Service (TAIS)** is a nationally operated phone-in service for health professionals, **1300 138 677**.

For other information go to [www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)

## National Prescribing Curriculum

The National Prescribing Curriculum (NPC) for senior medical students was developed by the NPS in collaboration with nine Australian medical schools and the Australian Society of Clinical and Experimental Pharmacologists and Toxicologists (ASCEPT).

Students started using the Curriculum in 2001. The Curriculum was developed during 1999-2000 in response to stakeholders identifying educational support for students and young prescribers as the highest priority.

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