

Administration of Oral Systemic Therapy for Cancer

A Quick Reference for Charge Nurses/Clinical Leads on Non-oncology Units

Oral systemic therapy for cancer is **HIGH RISK** medication and therefore must be prepared, administered and handled according to specific guidelines.¹

Oral cytotoxic/biologic agents should be labeled as hazardous drugs by pharmacy, highlighting the need for safe handling.

It is recommended that oral chemotherapy doses only be administered by nurses knowledgeable about the drug, cytotoxic precautions, management of expected toxicities and other care required by oncology patients.

Registered Nurses should be responsible for the administration of oral systemic therapy in the instances of:

- Administration of first cycles
- Administration of doses if new toxicities are identified and/or doses require modification
- Administration of clinical trial drugs
- Administration of drugs to patients with unstable clinical status or unpredictable outcomes

When a patient taking oral systemic therapy for cancer is admitted to a non-oncology unit, the Charge Nurse/Clinical Lead or his/her designate must ensure that the patient's Oncologist is notified that they have been admitted. The Oncologist will then determine if the oral systemic therapy will be continued during the hospitalization¹.

If the Oncologist orders that oral systemic therapy will be continued during the hospitalization, the Charge Nurse/Clinical Lead should:

1. Print and review the [Quick Reference for Nurses](#) and place it on the patient's chart.
2. Print and review the appropriate [Medication Information Sheet](#) and place it on the patient's chart.
3. Print and review your District's [Safe Handling Policy](#) and place it on the patient's chart.
4. Ensure the appropriate [personal protective equipment](#) and cytotoxic precaution [signage](#) is available for nurses administering the medication.
5. Ensure non-nursing staff and housekeeping staff are knowledgeable about cytotoxic precaution practices and that personal protective equipment is available.
6. Ensure the nurses who will administer the medication review the 'Quick Reference for Nurses on Non-Oncology Units', the Medication Information Sheet and your District's Safe Handling Policy prior to administering the medication.

¹ Cancer Care Nova Scotia (CCNS). (2014). Oral Systemic Therapy for Cancer Standards of Practice. Halifax, Nova Scotia: Province of Nova Scotia

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7. Prior to discharge, arrange to have an Oncology Health Professional conduct patient teaching related to the oral systemic therapy the patient will be taking at home.

Nurses who administer oral systemic therapy for cancer are encouraged to review the resources in *Cancer Care Nova Scotia's* [Oral Systemic Therapy for Cancer: A Toolkit for Nurses](#).

For additional information please contact your clinical nurse educator or designated Oncology Practice Consultant:

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