

Singapore Office

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Clinical Practice

Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy (OPAT) at NUH

The OPAT initiative was undertaken to improve the care of patients being treated with intravenous antibiotics. This was achieved by providing the “right site of care” through development of an outpatient parenteral antibiotic therapy (OPAT) service.

It is estimated that 10-15 patients who are well enough to be discharged stay in hospital for their IV antibiotics. They occupy beds that could otherwise be available for patients with acute illness.

Interventions were undertaken to make this happen by establishing a multi-department team comprising medical, nursing, finance, operations and pharmacy staff. The service was phased in three stages. Necessary guidelines and protocols were developed and approval sought from the ministry of health.

- Phase 1: Usage of antibiotics requiring once daily administration only.
- Phase 2: Usage of antibiotics via a continuous infusor where once daily dosing unsuitable
- Phase 3: Administration of IV antibiotic at home via carer administration or via outreach nurses in the community.

Principal selection criteria focused on

1. Patients requiring antibiotics and there is no effective oral alternative.
2. Where the Diagnosis and Treatment plan is clear.
3. Medically stable patients not requiring hospital based monitoring.
4. Patients with adequate support at home; able to responsibly care for IV access
5. Able to return to hospital if and as needed

Results

The gains of OPAT Clinic initiative have been twofold. NUH gained bed days saving, and patients benefited from cost saving. Orthopaedic patients benefited most as 45% of patients originated from orthopaedic department. It has proven to be safe and effective measure with only 7.2% readmission rate.

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Lessons learnt

- A multidisciplinary team with a dedicated nurse champion is central to the success of OPAT.
- Medical device selection is vital to ensure safety and ease of delivery.
- Adherence to policies and protocols is key to ensure efficiency and safety.
- Funding rules posed a limitation to attract patients to opt for this service.

The full potential of OPAT will only be realized once the same funding rules are applied to this service as accorded to inpatient services.