**Pharmaceutical Drugs of Addiction System**

NSW Ministry of Health

# Background

The Pharmaceutical Drugs of Addiction System (PHDAS) is an administrative database used by the Pharmaceutical Services Unit of NSW Ministry of Health to facilitate the authorisation of medical practitioners to prescribe drugs of addiction. PHDAS consists of three subsystems: the Methadone Subsystem, the Non-Methadone Subsystem and the Stimulant Notification Subsystem.

The Methadone Subsystem records details of patients participating in the NSW Opioid Treatment Program (OTP), authorities issued to approved prescribers for Schedule 8 drugs used in the OTP (methadone, buprenorphine), and facilities (administration points) approved to dispense under the OTP. The subsystem was implemented in 1985. Most data items are complete from 1999. The total number of persons on the OTP as at 1 September 2011 was 18,770.

The Non-Methadone Subsystem is used by Pharmaceutical Services Unit to issue authorities to prescribe Schedule 8 drugs of addiction, predominantly for the treatment of chronic pain and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This subsystem was implemented in 1985. The total number of valid authorities at 1 January 2012 was 4,260.

The Stimulant Notification Subsystem is used by Pharmaceutical Services Unit to record details of prescriptions written for psychostimulants for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) that are notified to the NSW Ministry of Health by generally authorised psychostimulant prescribers. This subsystem was implemented in 1999. The total number of notified prescriptions recorded in 2010 was 45,265.

# Information recorded on the PHDAS database (Methadone subsystem) includes:

* Program (treatment) information: start date, start dose, maximum authorised dose, program type, drug, end date, last dose, date of last dose, reason for ending program.
* Patient/program-specific details: Sex, country of birth, indigenous status, principal source of income, primary opioid drug of dependence, other drugs perceived by patient to be health concern, priority treatment status (pregnancy, HIV status of patient or patient’s opioid-using partner).

# Information recorded on the PHDAS database (Non-Methadone subsystem) includes:

* Treatment/authorisation details: start date, end date, drug, dose, diagnosis.

# Information recorded on the PHDAS database (Stimulant Notification Subsystem) includes:

* Prescription details: date, drug, dose.

# Previous linkage projects conducted through CHeReL include:

Project: People with Mental Health Disorders and Cognitive Disabilities in the Criminal Justice System. This study aimed to provide a detailed description and analysis of the pathways by which people with mental health disorders and cognitive disabilities (MHDCD) enter, move through, exit and return to the criminal justice system. Principal researcher: Dr Leanne Dowse, School of Social Sciences and International Studies UNSW Sydney NSW 2052.

Project: Long-term impacts of methadone maintenance treatment on offending, hepatitis C and mortality among ex-prisoners. This project used data linkage to examine criminality, hepatitis C infections and mortality among a cohort of ex−prisoners with a history of methadone maintenance treatment (MMT). Principal researcher: Dr Kate Dolan, NDARC, University of NSW, Sydney NSW 2052.

Project: Comparing the safety and effectiveness of Buprenorphine and Methadone for Heroin Addiction. The aim of this study was to compare health outcomes associated with buprenorphine and methadone treatment for heroin addiction using a previously identified cohort of 6,159 people entering their first episode of treatment. The research investigated 2 important health outcomes − hospitalisation, and pregnancy / perinatal outcomes. Principal researcher: A/Prof James Bell, The Langton Centre, Surry Hills NSW 2010.

Project: Mental illness and substance use: Impact on birth and neonatal outcomes. This project set out to assess the burden of perinatal morbidity and mortality contributed by mental ill-health and substance use individually and together for the whole of NSW and by health areas/regions. Principal researcher: A/Prof Elizabeth Sullivan, AIHW National Perinatal Statistics Unit, Sydney Children’s Hospital, Randwick NSW 2031.

Project: Mothers and Gestation in Custody: Data Linkage Study of birth and neonatal outcomes of women in prison during pregnancy. The aim of the record linkage study was to determine the impact of incarceration during pregnancy on birth and neonatal outcomes. Principal researcher: A/Prof Elizabeth Sullivan, AIHW National Perinatal Statistics Unit, Sydney Children’s Hospital, Randwick NSW 2031.

# Availability of data for studies:

These data are available to researchers for further study subject to approval from ethics committees corresponding with the NSW Ministry of Health and other checks. For further information contact the Senior Analyst Information Management at Pharmaceutical Services in the NSW Ministry of Health (details below).

For a list of variables available for data linkage projects please contact the Senior Analyst Information Management at Pharmaceutical Services in the NSW Ministry of Health (details below) or CHeReL staff on [cherel@moh.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:cherel@moh.health.nsw.gov.au). A list of variables available for data linkage projects can also be accessed on the CHeReL website at: <http://www.cherel.org.au/external-datasets>

# Data custodian

Chief Pharmacist, NSW Ministry of Health

# Contact for data enquiries

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