

MEDIA RELEASE

25 May 2018

CCC reports on management of dangerous drugs in WA hospitals

The Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) has today (Friday 25 May 2018) tabled its [*Report on serious misconduct risks around dangerous drugs in hospitals*](#) in Parliament, which focusses on the management of dangerous drugs and the issue of theft and misuse of addictive pharmaceuticals in WA hospitals.

The report shows that while the total number of drug discrepancies notified to the Commission by WA Health is small compared to the millions of drug transactions each year in WA hospitals, it appears that theft and misuse of dangerous drugs by employees is an ongoing problem.

Further to that, the Commission remains concerned about the level and nature of unexplained drug discrepancies in our hospitals, the failure by employees to make notifications, the way in which they are investigated by WA Health, and some of the conclusions that are reached regarding the reasons for the discrepancies.

Today's report is supplementary to last year's [*Report on the Supply and Management of Schedule 8 Controlled Drugs at Certain Public Hospitals in Western Australia*](#) which focused on the repeated theft of drugs by a senior pharmacist at Fiona Stanley Hospital.

In preparing this report the Commission also referred to its 2010 report relating WA Health, a report by the WA Auditor General and a number of case studies relating to specific examples of discrepancies in the management of drugs including coronial inquests into the deaths of two nurses as a result of drug overdoses.

As part of its investigation the Commission also analysed the notifications it received from WA Health about drug discrepancies in the use and management of Schedule 4¹ and Schedule 8² restricted drugs over the four-year period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2017. The analysis found:

- 47% (183 of 390) of notifications were from Royal Perth Hospital (RPH), Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) and Fremantle Hospital (FH)
- Of the 183 notifications received from RPH, SCGH and FH:
 - 52% occurred on the wards
 - 27.5% occurred in emergency
 - 9% occurred on night shift
 - 23% occurred on a weekend shift (where a date was identified)
 - 16 notifications related to the loss of a patients' own drugs.

¹ Schedule 4 refers to 'prescription medications'.

² Schedule 8 refers to 'controlled drugs'

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The Commission noted that while it has analysed data relating to drug discrepancies at these three particular hospitals, it is likely that the problems identified also occur at other hospitals and other WA Health facilities.

The report outlines nine recommendations which the Commission hopes will assist WA Health's five Health Service Providers³, who are responsible for the management and security of these drugs, in mitigating the risk of serious misconduct that is inherent when dealing with drugs that are addictive and dangerous.

The recommendations include a review of policies to ensure that drug management; recording and reporting of discrepancies is consistent across WA Health; that there is immediate reporting of drug discrepancies; and that ongoing education and training of staff in drug management is implemented.

The Commission proposes to further report on the implementation of its recommendations in a year's time.

ENDS

Read the Report

[*Report on serious misconduct risks around dangerous drugs in hospitals.pdf*](#)

Related Reports

[*Misconduct Handling Procedures in the Western Australian Public Sector: WA Health – tabled in Parliament 22 April 2010*](#)

[*Report on the Supply and Management of Schedule 8 Controlled Drugs at Certain Public Hospitals in Western Australia – tabled in Parliament 20 June 2017*](#)

Media contacts

Marie Mills: (08) 9421 3600 or 0418 918 202

Louisa Mitchell: (08) 9421 3600 or 0434 308 208.

³ The five WA Health Service Providers are North Metropolitan Health Service; South Metropolitan Health Service; East Metropolitan Health Service; Child and Adolescent Health Service and WA Country Health Service.