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Defence Health Services Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committee

A DEFENCE HEALTH SERVICES therapeutics advisory group was formed in December 1996, as the Therapeutics Advisory Working Party. In response to the recommendation of the Australian National Audit Office report on the DHS,¹ and later reinforced in the more comprehensive analysis of the DHS by Major General Paul Stevens (retired) in April 2004, the Defence Health Services Pharmaceutical and Therapeutics Committee (DHSPTC) was established. The first meeting of the DHSPTC was held in August 2004, and the committee continues to meet in Canberra five times per year.

The role of the DHSPTC is to ensure that all members of the Australian Defence Force receive a comprehensive and professional pharmacy service by evaluating the clinical use of therapeutic substances, developing policies for managing therapeutic substance use and administration, and managing the formulary system.

The DHSPTC is to be the expert group that will advise Head Defence Health Services (HDHS) on the strategic direction and policy development with respect to, but not limited to, the application of the *National medicines policy*,² which embraces the *National strategy for quality use of medicines* (QUM),³ for the ADF, both on operations, including humanitarian assistance, and in the National Support Area.

The chairperson and members are invited and appointed by HDHS. The DHSPTC is composed of the chairperson, appointed for a 3-year term, and eight other members. Membership representation is drawn from the single services, Defence Materiel Organisation, Director of Clinical Policy DHSD, Headquarters Joint Operational Command, and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), with SO1 Health Materiel, Logistics and Pharmacy DHSD as executive secretary.

The committee is to consider the QUM matters referred by other relevant Defence committees, groups and services, and to develop partnerships and communication with QUM bodies statewide, nationally and internationally for sharing best-practice processes in QUM. The DHSPTC is to make recommendations concerning therapeutic substances and other items and devices, including non-TGA-registered pharmaceuticals and medical devices, for use in the ADF, including restrictions surrounding their use.

Current tasking undertaken by the DHSPTC includes completing the preparation and updating of the Defence Index of Therapeutic Items for Deployment, the Defence Index of Therapeutic Items for Humanitarian Operations, and a Defence Index of Therapeutic Items within the National Support Area.

Major Wendy Walker

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