

# PALLIATIVE MEDS INFO NEWSLETTER

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Palliative Meds Info is a medicines information service which provides advice on all aspects of medicines use in palliative care. Contact us at Our Lady's Hospice and Care Services on 01 4912578 or email [palliativemedinfo@olh.ie](mailto:palliativemedinfo@olh.ie) or view the Palliative Meds Info webpage available from the OLH&CS website [www.olh.ie](http://www.olh.ie)



## Website update

In order to make our website more user friendly, we have recently added a table of contents with links to all our documents on the homepage. The quick reference is listed in alphabetical order. The "Ctrl F" function can also facilitate searching for a particular document. Any feedback would be much appreciated.

<https://olh.ie/our-services/palliative-care/palliative-meds-info/>

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with options: Home, About Us, Our Services, Education & Research, Fundraising, Careers, and Volunteering. The main content area is titled 'Palliative Meds Info' and includes a welcome message, a description of the service, and a link to 'Palliative Meds Info Terms and Conditions'. A red circle highlights the 'Quick reference' and 'Palliative Meds Info Documents' sections. The 'Quick reference' section lists: 'Access to medicines in the community', 'Adrenaline (nebulised)', and 'Adrenaline (topical)'. The 'Palliative Meds Info Documents' section lists: 'Access to Medicines in the Community', 'Nebulised adrenaline to treat intractable cough', and 'What is the guidance available for the use of adrenaline soaks on wounds'. On the right side, there is a box titled 'How can the service be accessed?' with contact information and a list of documents: 'HSE National Clinical Effectiveness Committee Guidelines', '1. Pharmacological Management of Cancer Pain in Adults', '2. Management of Constipation in Adult Patients Receiving Palliative Care', 'HSE COVID-19 Palliative Care Clinical Guidance', and '1. Anticipatory Prescribing in the Last Hours of Days of Life'.

## New documents recently added to website

- [Benzodiazepines via the buccal or sublingual routes in palliative care](#)
- [The use of oral morphine in palliative care](#)
- [Oramorph® \(morphine sulphate\) for breathlessness: Patient Information Leaflet](#)
- [Risk of seizures in anti-emetics/anti-secretory agents](#)

## Documents recently updated on the website

- [What are the treatment options for the management of dry mouth](#)
- [Can pilocarpine eye drops be used to treat a dry mouth](#)
- [The Use of Fentanyl in a Syringe Pump in Palliative Medicine](#)
- [Sodium Valproate in a syringe pump](#)

## Oral care for patients with palliative care needs

Oral care is an essential component in the care of patients with palliative care needs. Symptoms such as sore, dry or inflamed mouths can cause considerable patient distress and affect everything from speech to confidence and appetite.

We have recently revised our Palliative Meds Info documents on The Treatment of Dry Mouth, The Treatment of Painful Mouth and on The Use of Pilocarpine

Eyedrops in Palliative Medicine (links above). Of significance, where saliva substitutes were previously recommended by specialist palliative care reference sources for the primary management of dry mouth, saliva stimulants such as pilocarpine are now favoured in the majority of patients. To learn more, visit our website to download the relevant documents.



## The use of fentanyl via continuous subcutaneous infusion (CSCI)

Though rarely used in Our Lady's Hospice, patients may be on fentanyl via CSCI in the community setting, or when admitted to hospice care from the acute setting.

Often, fentanyl is prescribed to patients who are renally compromised. To learn more, visit our website to download the relevant document.



## Management of palliative patients in the community

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of documents were produced to aid in the management of palliative care patients in the community by general practitioners, including the use of oral morphine in palliative care and the use of benzodiazepines via the buccal or sublingual route. To learn more, visit our website to download the relevant documents.

## Sodium Valproate in a Syringe Pump

Updated guidance is now available on the website. Of significance, the document now contains a suggested dosing regime where patients have not been on sodium valproate before. To learn more, visit our website to download the relevant document.

## Possible errors in Palliative Care Medicines dispensing

There have been a number of medication dispensing errors reported to have occurred in the community following the receipt of palliative care prescriptions. The following table highlights some common errors and easy to confuse medications:

<p><b>Rapifen®:</b> contains 500 micrograms (0.5 milligrams) of alfentanil per milliliter</p> <p>(Generally prescribed where doses of alfentanil are <math>\leq 20</math>mg over 24 hours)</p>	<p><b>Rapifen® Intensive Care:</b> contains 5 milligrams of alfentanil per milliliter</p> <p>(Generally prescribed only where <u>very high doses</u> of alfentanil are being used)</p>
<p><b>Serenace® 500 microgram tablets:</b> contains 0.5 milligrams of haloperidol</p> <p>(Typical dose prescribed in palliative care)</p>	<p><b>Serenace® 5mg tablets:</b> contains 5 milligrams of haloperidol</p> <p>(Dose more typical in psychiatric medicine)</p>
<p><b>Oxynorm® 1mg/1mL Oral Solution:</b> contains 1mg of oxycodone in every milliliter</p>	<p><b>Oxynorm Concentrate® 10mg/mL Oral Solution:</b> contains 10mg of oxycodone in every milliliter</p>
<p><b>Methadone 1mg/mL Oral Solution:</b> contains 1mg of methadone in every milliliter</p>	<p><b>Methadone Concentrate 10mg/mL (special from Pinewood Pharmaceuticals) Oral Solution:</b> contains 10mg of methadone in every milliliter</p> <p>(May be used in patients receiving large doses of methadone for pain or where swallow is an issue)</p>
<p><b>Oxynorm® capsules:</b> immediate release preparation</p>	<p><b>Oxycontin® tablets:</b> modified release preparation</p>
<p><b>Palladone® capsules:</b> immediate release preparation</p>	<p><b>Palladone® SR capsules:</b> modified release preparation</p>

- *Patients/carers must always be counselled where a new/alternative product strength is being used to avoid the risk of an over- / under- dose*
- *Prescribe specific brand of opioid required e.g. Oxynorm® and seek clarification where unclear*
- *Always state strength and formulation of product required e.g. 1mg/1mL oral solution and state dose clearly in milligrams on prescription. Seek clarification where unclear*