Date: **UPDATED:** March 27, 2020
Memo To: Physicians, Pharmacy, Respiratory Therapy and Nursing
From: Pharmacy Managers

RE: **Conservation of salbutamol inhalers during COVID-19 pandemic**

Situation:

To decrease the risk of aerosolized transmission of coronavirus, metered dose inhalers (MDIs) are recommended as a safer, effective alternative for the administration of inhaled medications. Unfortunately, the MDI supply is at significant risk due to increased demand. Of particular concern is the supply of salbutamol (VENTOLIN) MDIs, a short-acting bronchodilator.

The current supply is not sufficient to meet demand; salbutamol MDIs are at risk of depletion.

Mitigation Strategies:

Clinical Guidance – *at discretion of care team given concurrent concerns related to conservation of PPE, staff safety and uncertainty related to the presence or absence of coronavirus infection on initial presentation*

- Reserve salbutamol MDIs for non-intubated patients on droplet precautions and/or with confirmed or potential COVID-19.
- Use nebulized salbutamol (+/- ipratropium) for patients not on precautions and are not suspected to have or are confirmed negative for COVID-19.
- Use alternate bronchodilators for maintenance therapy when clinically appropriate. Available options include salmeterol, formoterol, tiotropium and ipratropium (+/- corticosteroid).
- NOTE: Pharmacy is attempting to source salbutamol (VENTOLIN DISKUS) respiratory powder, salbutamol-ipratropium (COMBIVENT RESPIMAT) respiratory solution and terbutaline (BRICANYL TURBUHALER) respiratory powder; these products are currently not available.

- Use patient's own salbutamol MDIs if available:
    - BC Ambulance Service (BCAS) paramedics will bring patient's own MDIs when transporting a patient to a health care site.
    - Keep patient's own MDI other belongings in the care space to minimize viral spread.
    - Nurse to identify patient's own salbutamol MDI - do not send to pharmacy for identification. Identification includes:
        - Confirming medication name and strength located on the MDI canister
        - Checking expiry date
    - Pharmacy will document in the order comment field: *Limited hospital supply: use patient's own medication if available*.
    - This process temporarily supersedes the usual POM policy C.09.
    - Use Island Health-supplied salbutamol MDIs if patient's own supply is unavailable, expired or cannot be identified.

- Pharmacy is investigating a process to recycle salbutamol MDIs and will issue a communication if and when ready for implementation

Questions: Contact Site Pharmacy or Review Pharmacy COVID-19 Page