ANTIMICROBIAL STEWARDSHIP POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure that Bilingual Care promotes the optimal management of antimicrobials, to maximise the effectiveness of treatment and minimise the potential for harm (including drug resistance and toxicity) in consumers. It establishes Bilingual Care's key directives to support appropriate antimicrobial prescribing and management, with reference to antimicrobial prescribing processes, management of antimicrobial formulary and restrictions, use of evidence-based therapy, and access to expert clinical advice.

This policy and procedure applies to all Bilingual Care staff, consumers, and their family members, carers and other supporters, and meets relevant legislation, regulations and Standards.

Applicable Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

- *Standard 2. The Organisation*
- *Standard 3. The Care and Services*
- *Standard 5. Clinical Care*

Definitions[1]

Antimicrobial **–** a medicine that kills microorganisms, like bacteria, or stops them from growing. Antibiotics and antifungals are antimicrobials.

Antimicrobial resistance **–** when microorganisms such as bacteria become resistant to antimicrobial medicines such as antibiotics. This results in medications becoming less effective and infections persist in the body, increasing the risk of spread to others.

Antimicrobial stewardship **–** efforts by an organisation to reduce the risk related to increasing antimicrobial resistance and to extend the effectiveness of antimicrobial treatments. It can include a broad range of strategies, such as monitoring and reviewing how antimicrobials are used.

Policy

Bilingual Care aims for ongoing and systematic effort to optimise the use of consumers' antimicrobial medicines. Bilingual Care's objectives include, but are not limited to the following:

- reducing inappropriate antimicrobial use
- improving consumer care outcomes and

[1] Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care 2023, *Antimicrobial Stewardship*, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sydney, NSW, accessed 20 August 2025, https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/antimicrobial-stewardship

- mitigating adverse consequences of antimicrobial use.

Risk Analysis

Common infections can include but are not limited to:

- Bronchitis
- Cellulitis
- Cystitis
- Leg ulcers
- Otitis media
- Rhinosinusitis
- Tonsilitis and
- Gastroenteritis.

Common side effects of antibiotics can include, but are not limited to:

- milk skin rash
- soft stools, short-term diarrhea
- upset stomach or nausea
- loss of appetite and
- fungal (yeast) vaginal infections or oral thrush.

Severe side effects of antibiotics can include, but are not limited to:

- difficulty breathing
- facial swelling (lip, tongue, throat, face)
- severe watery or bloody diarrhoea
- clostridium difficile infection
- stomach cramps and
- yeast infection (white discharge with severe itching or mouth sores).

To assist staff to recognise infection symptoms in consumers they must be provided relevant training. Wherever possible, there must also be consistency of staff for consumers, so they are better able to recognise and report any changes in consumers' health. Staff must also implement infection prevention and control techniques (as per the *Infection Control Policy and Procedure)* to reduce risks to and educate consumers. Consumers identified as at high risk of infections should have an alert on their file and be frequently monitored.

Antimicrobial resistance can cause consumers to develop a resistance to a particular medication used to treat an infection. There is a link between antimicrobial resistance and the misuse or overuse of antibiotics and in these instances, it can make it difficult to treat infections in consumers. To reduce the risk of resistant infections emerging and spreading, consumers with a high use of antimicrobials should have their antibiotic history assessed.

Generally, research shows that inadequate staff knowledge has been linked to antibiotic overuse in consumers. To overcome this challenge, Bilingual Care must ensure appropriately qualified health professionals assist and manage consumers with infections and treatments (including antibiotics).

Procedures

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff must work within their scope of practice appropriate to their level of training and

responsibility. Further information can be found in Bilingual Care's *Position Descriptions and Duties Policy and Procedure and* respective staff *Position Descriptions.*

All staff and external professionals in consumers' multidisciplinary teams have a responsibility for the health and welfare of consumers. To ensure Bilingual Care's standards and commitments are delivered, the following responsibilities are assigned:

The Leadership Team is responsible for:

- antimicrobial stewardship governance, including:
  - monitoring antimicrobial use and patterns
  - identifying opportunities for improvement including review and
  - auditing of the use and compliance rates of infection control policies and procedures
- promoting a multidisciplinary approach in the development and ongoing evaluation of antimicrobial stewardship. This might include consulting with external health professionals for expert clinical advice
- frequently reviewing antimicrobial stewardship strategies and analysing Bilingual Care's data regarding the antimicrobial stewardship
- promoting best- and evidence-based practice and using available resources to raise awareness (e.g., posters, pamphlets) with staff, consumers, and others, including the importance of safe antimicrobial use.

The Clinical Advisor is responsible for:

- monitoring consumer documentation surrounding infections
- reviewing escalations that have occurred, including to external health professionals, in a timely manner
- reporting to the Leadership Team monthly on data collected and emerging trends from incident reports and feedback in relation to antimicrobial resistance and
- ensuring staff are appropriately qualified, trained, and updated on relevant procedures. This includes ensuring they complete relevant training (e.g., infection prevention and control, safe use of antimicrobials, and recognition of signs and symptoms of infection).

Clinical staff are responsible for:

- following consumers' *Medication Plans*
- performing duties within with their scope of practice
- being able to recognise symptoms relating to the complications of consumers' risks and manage these in accordance with Bilingual Care's policies and procedures and their clinical judgement
- including and involving consumers' multidisciplinary teams in the assessment, planning, intervention, and review of *Medication Plans*
- involving the consumer with their care planning and ensuring all information available is accessible including information that is culturally and linguistically appropriate and provided in ways that meet their individual communication needs
- maintaining consumer-focused *Care Plans and* documentation
- undertaking and documenting appropriate assessments
- recognising abnormalities in consumers' health and reporting changes to the Clinical Advisor
- promoting and maintaining infection prevention and control processes
- completing specific training prior to providing support for consumers and
- following Bilingual Care's policies and procedures.

Non-clinical support staff are responsible for:

- supporting consumers who require medication administration (including antibiotic

medicines) within their scope and training
- understanding why consumers are on a particular medication (including the adverse effects)
- escalating any concerns or abnormalities, changes in the consumer's health or if they are uncertain about the consumer's medication requirements to the Clinical Advisor
- promoting and maintaining infection prevention and control processes
- completing specific training prior to providing support for consumers and
- following Bilingual Care's policies and procedures.

Visiting or external health professionals are responsible for:
- their own practice and working within their legal and professional responsibilities relating to their competence and
- working within their job description and the Code of Practice of their professional body.

The requirements of what specific roles can assist with must be clearly documented in consumers' *Medication Plans.*

General Requirements

Staff must follow Bilingual Care's *Medication Management Policy and Procedure and Medication Plans with* respect to medication management and administration, including where antibiotics (short or long term) are required.

The Clinical Advisor must ensure consumers receive routine health care, physical examinations, immunisations, assessments, and treatment for health conditions, including illnesses and injuries, from their health practitioner or similar. This includes the prescription of medications, including antibiotics/antimicrobials.

Should staff have concerns about consumers' use of antimicrobials, they must contact the Clinical Advisor, who is responsible for communicating with consumers, their representatives and treating health practitioners (with consumers' consent).

Antimicrobial Prescribing

While Bilingual Care is not responsible for prescribing antimicrobials, the Leadership Team must promote processes to support appropriate antimicrobial prescribing and use.

This *Antimicrobial Stewardship Policy and Procedure* aligns with the *Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) Clinical Care Standard*[2] that guides clinicians and health service managers on delivering appropriate care when prescribing antimicrobials. This document should be implemented in conjunction with the *Therapeutic Guidelines: Antibiotics*[3]*,* which contains comprehensive information about treatment approaches. Clinical staff should consider these guidelines in conjunction with prescribers' clinical judgement, microbiology testing and consumers' documented allergies and adverse reactions in relation to consumer needs.

Where a consumer has been prescribed an antimicrobial, clinical staff must ensure the

[2] Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care 2020, *Antimicrobial Stewardship Clinical Care Standard*, Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, Sydney, NSW, accessed 20 August 2025 https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/antimicrobial-stewardship/antimicrobial-stewardship-clinical-care-standard

[3] Therapeutic Guidelines 2024, *Antibiotic*, Therapeutic Guidelines Limited, accessed 20 August 2025, https://tgldcdp.tg.org.au/index.

prescription has all key prescribing elements and is clearly documented. Where there is a verbal order, staff must follow procedures in the *Medication Management Policy and Procedure to* confirm prescriptions after they have been provided (see 'Phone Orders').

As part of Bilingual Care's monitoring and review activities, the Leadership Team must review whether prescribers have supported best practice, and may provide reports to prescribers addressing:

- whether the prescription was made based on best practice and in accordance with the *Therapeutic Guidelines*
- outcomes of consumer reviews
- whether the prescription was clear and effectively communicated and
- consumer feedback on whether they received clear information about their clinical condition and treatment, in a way they understood.

All staff involved in overseeing and supporting consumers' medication management must be:

- educated on antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial stewardship and
- supported to report any concerns about the constant or increasing prescription of antimicrobials for consumers to the Clinical Advisor.

Antimicrobial Management

Principles

Bilingual Care must promote the following principles to manage antimicrobial use in the community:

- Decisions about antimicrobial prescribing must be based on careful clinical assessment, ensuring that the benefits of antimicrobial use are always weighed against the potential for harm.
- Documentation for all antimicrobial prescriptions should be clear, to enable effective communication.
- Consumers should always receive clear information about their clinical condition and treatment (including alternative treatment or monitoring options) in a form they can understand.
- Regular review and refinement of antimicrobial therapy should occur based on consumers' clinical progress (improvement or deterioration) and available clinical information (investigation results).

Approach

Bilingual Care promotes preventing and controlling infections, thereby minimising the need for antimicrobial use. This includes but not limited to:

- staff performing appropriate hand hygiene frequently, practicing respiratory hygiene, and using aseptic technique.
- staff taking a consumer-focussed approach, concentrating on their individual risks, and providing education to them about antimicrobial management techniques, in a way they understand, such as:
    - appropriate hand hygiene practices and the benefits
    - environment cleaning and disinfecting (including appropriate solutions)
    - identifying infections
- having available and adequate supplies of equipment, including PPE
- ensuring staff handle sharps and clinical waste appropriately
- supporting staff to undertake environment and equipment cleaning (including education on disinfection methods)

- educating staff and consumers on Standard and Transmission-based precautions (including for contact, droplet, and airborne infectious diseases)
- providing training and education to staff on:
    - infection prevention and control
    - identifying infections and escalation processes and
    - safe antimicrobial use
- having processes in place for outbreak prevention and management
- linking antimicrobial management to Clinical Governance and
- ensuring consumers have access to health status screenings and immunisation.

Suspected Infection

Where a consumer is suspected of having an infection, clinical staff must clinically assess them within 48 hours and inform their regular health practitioner. Following the assessment, clinical staff must provide the consumer or their registered supporter with information on their health condition and treatment options, in a format and language they can understand. This includes alternative non-pharmacological strategies to manage the infection. If clinical staff or the consumer's health practitioner feel antimicrobial prescribing is required, a microbiology test (see below) will be promoted prior to the prescription (where necessary).

Short- or Long-term Antimicrobial Prescription

Where a consumer has been prescribed an antimicrobial and Bilingual Care is providing medication administration support, staff must ensure the treatment commences as soon as possible and have a plan in place to manage the infected area during and post finishing the medication.

Staff must encourage consumers to complete the full course of antimicrobials prescribed, even if symptoms have improved or resolved. This reduces the risk of resistance and ensures the effectiveness of the treatment.

Where the consumer is on a prolonged (long-term) antimicrobial prescription, they must be reviewed at least every 6 months to determine if ongoing use is still appropriate.

Any adverse reactions to antimicrobials are to be managed immediately by contacting emergency services and/or the Clinical Advisor. A reaction to a medication is considered a clinical incident and staff should respond in accordance with Bilingual Care's *Consumer Incident Management Policy and Procedure.*

In all cases, where antimicrobials are prescribed, the following must occur for each consumer and each prescription:

- accurate clinical assessment of the consumer and their condition
- diagnosis from a medical officer
- appropriate microbiological test completed (where necessary)
- correct antibiotic prescribed
- correct dose prescribed
- antibiotics administered through the correct route
- antibiotics administered at the correct time
- antibiotics administered for the correct duration of time and
- timely reviews.

Monitoring

Each consumer's infection status and antimicrobial use must be monitored individually by the Clinical Advisor when their *Care Plans and Medication Plans are* reviewed, or more regularly if required.

The Clinical Advisor must also review antimicrobial use across the organisation and report their findings to the Leadership Team.

Microbiological Testing

Where a consumer has a life-threatening condition due to a suspected infection, they are to receive antimicrobials immediately, without waiting for the results of investigations. This can include conditions such as:

- Sepsis – when the body's response to an infection injures its own tissues and organs
- Meningitis – an infection of the tissues lining the brain and
- Necrotising fasciitis – a serious infection from a flesh-eating bacterium.

Where a consumer is suspected of having a life-threatening condition, staff must escalate immediately to emergency services and inform the Clinical Advisor.

Where a consumer is suspected of having an infection and it is not considered life-threatening, the Clinical Advisor must consult the consumers' regular medical officer and collect a specimen for the appropriate microbiological test. While awaiting the test result, staff and the Clinical Advisor must monitor the consumer's health. If their health deteriorates, staff are to escalate immediately to emergency services and/or the Clinical Advisor.

Vaccination

Staff should promote vaccination with consumers upon their entry to the service, during *Care Plan reviews*, and during flu seasons. However, it is not compulsory for consumers to be vaccinated and it is their choice. See Bilingual Care's *Vaccination Policy and Procedure for* further guidance.

Disposing of Medications

Medications must be disposed of safely and in a manner that is not harmful to the environment. Due to antimicrobial impacts on the environment if disposed of incorrectly, staff must dispose of excess, expired, or unwanted antimicrobial medicines at local community pharmacies or appropriate disposal bins. See Bilingual Care's *Waste Management Policy and Procedure for* further details on the appropriate disposal method.

Incidents and Reporting

Where staff have any concerns or questions about a consumer's antimicrobial management or their responsibilities, they must refer to the Clinical Advisor for guidance.

Incidents relating to medication management must be reported in accordance with Bilingual Care's *Consumer Incident Management and Open Disclosure policies* and procedures.

Care Plan Review

Where an incident is a result of a consumer's health deterioration, their *Care Plan must* be reviewed immediately, as per the *Care Review Policy and Procedure.*

Supporting Documents

Documents relevant to this policy and procedure include:

- *Position Descriptions and Duties Policy and Procedure*
- *Infection Control Policy and Procedure*
- *Medication Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Waste Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Consumer Incident Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Open Disclosure Policy and Procedure*
- *Care Review Policy and Procedure*
- *Position Descriptions*
- *Medication Plan and Consent Forms*
- *Care Plans*

Monitoring and Review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at least annually by the Leadership Team. Reviews will incorporate staff, consumer, and other stakeholder feedback.

Bilingual Care's *Continuous Improvement Plan* will be used to record improvements identified and monitor the progress of their implementation. Where relevant, this information will be considered as part of Bilingual Care's service planning and delivery processes.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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