

# Clinicians collaborate to improve access to COVID-19 care

## Background

In January 2022, the Therapeutic Goods Administration approved oral antiviral medicines for the treatment of COVID-19 in community patients with mild disease and at risk of progression to severe disease and hospitalisation. These medicines were inaccessible in the community setting given limited supply, limited knowledge regarding their use and lack of PBS listing. An innovative access model was required to ensure they were accessible to all eligible people of the jurisdiction to prevent hospitalisation.

## Objectives

An innovative access model was required to ensure they were accessible to all eligible people of the jurisdiction to prevent hospitalisation.

## Action (method)

True collaboration and a strong patient focus from all stakeholders enabled the successful implementation of an access model which allowed GPs and community-based medical specialists to provide prescriptions for dispensing by public hospital Pharmacy Departments (deviation from business-as-usual practice). These medications were couriered to patients enabling COVID-19 positive patients to receive early treatment and remain in the community.

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## Evaluation

To date, over 14,000 patients have successfully accessed antiviral treatment using this model, potentially contributing to a reduction in hospitalisations and COVID-19 related deaths. A suite of guidance documents and resources were also produced to improve knowledge and confidence in prescribing and taking these treatments, contributing to enhanced patient safety.

**>14,000**

patients have successfully accessed antiviral treatment

**>10,000**

downloads of the CEC website resources produced to support safe and appropriate use of these treatments

## Discussion

True collaboration and a strong patient focus from all stakeholders enabled the successful implementation of an access model which allowed GPs and community-based medical specialists to provide prescriptions for dispensing by public hospital Pharmacy Departments (significant deviation from business-as-usual practice). These medications were couriered to patients enabling COVID-19 positive patients to receive early treatment and remain in the community.

Since February 2022, over 14,000 patients have successfully accessed antiviral treatment using this model, potentially contributing to a reduction in hospitalisations and COVID-19 related deaths. A suite of guidance documents and resources were also produced to improve knowledge and confidence in prescribing and taking these vital treatments, contributing to enhanced patient safety.

The model has been pivotal in achieving the objective of safe, high-quality and equitable care being delivered across all settings. It introduced a reliable service which connected primary and tertiary healthcare to improve access and outcomes for all patients, including rural, regional and priority populations. Without intervention, these patients could have deteriorated and required hospital admission or been forced to present to Emergency Departments to access treatments.

This model transcended previous barriers to enable seamless care for COVID-19 positive patients in the community. The networks and relationships built throughout this process have already been transferred and scaled to a wider scope to promote further safety and quality initiatives that require a 'Whole of Health' approach.



Figure 1 - Internal and external stakeholders involved in establishing the access model

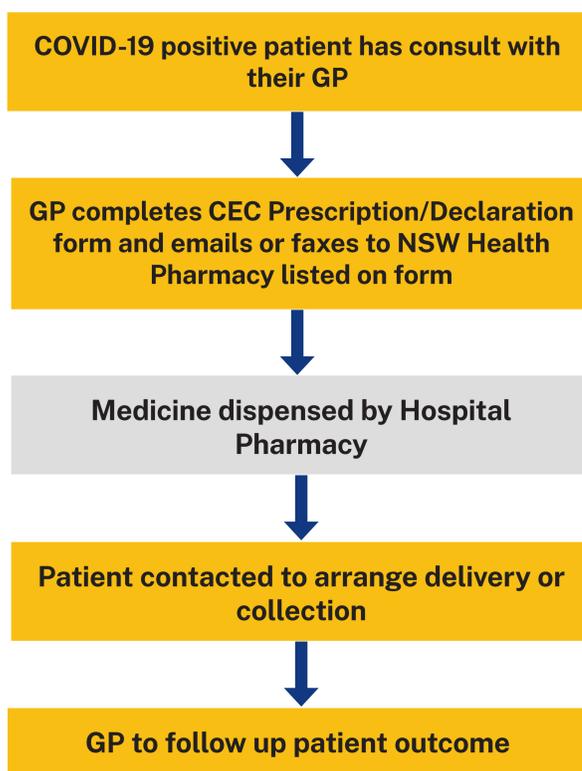


Figure 2 -

High level overview of the process for GPs and community based medical specialists to access supply of the oral antiviral medicines for their patients from a NSW Health Pharmacy Department.

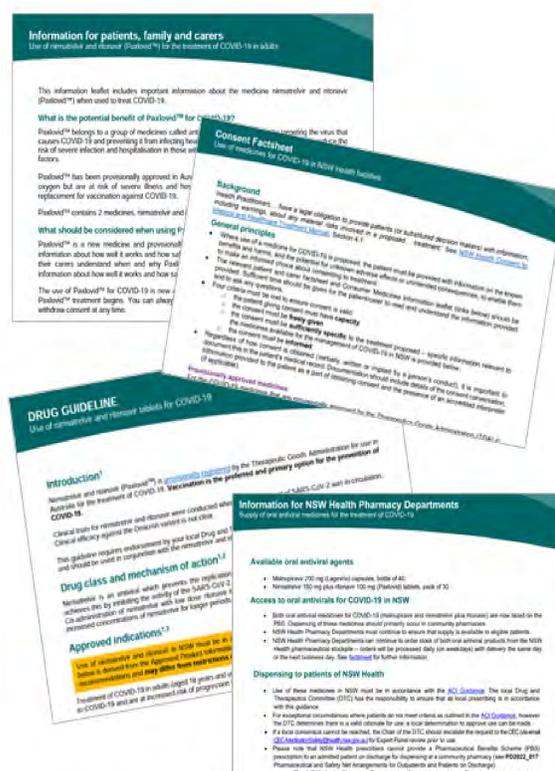


Figure 3 -

Examples of resources produced for clinicians and patients to support the safe and appropriate use of the oral antiviral medicines.