

GUIDELINES FOR DRUG DONATIONS

INTRODUCTION

A WHO/ Government of Vanuatu guide for those accepting and making donations of drugs.

Why do we need guidelines on the donation of drugs

Donations of medicines are made for a number of reasons including:

- a genuine desire to help, to do something good.
- in response to requests from the recipient.
- financial gains for the donor, such as tax deductions.

Why do both recipients and donors need guidelines on the donation of drugs?

Donors always intend well, but often do not realise the possible inconveniences and unwanted consequences at the receiving end. It is also fair to say that the donor and recipient do not communicate on equal terms, if they communicate at all. Drug needs vary from country to country and a donation should be made upon the actual needs of Vanuatu and not the perceived needs of another country. Drugs can be harmful if misused, they need to be identified easily through labels and written information, they may expire, they may have been stored badly and they may have to be destroyed in a professional way.

What are the problems with donations? (Taken from WHO guidelines for Drug donations)

Experience provides many examples of how drug donations can end up causing the recipient more problems than benefits. Problems arise for a number of reasons. For example:

- People who become involved in donating medicines may have no background in health issues, no understanding of the structure of health services of the recipient (usually based in a developing country) and no recognition of the need to seek the advice of experts.
- Companies, hospitals or private doctors often donate expired or nearly expired medication either because it provides them with tax exemptions or as a means of disposing of redundant stock. This type of donation is normally of poor quality.
- Potential donors may have patronising attitudes towards recipients, regarding them as desperate for any medical aid. Consultation of the recipient is not normally undertaken. The recipient may compound this problem by feeling obliged to accept any help, even if the medication is not required, and even if charges, such as import taxes and transport costs are involved.
- Many donated drugs are not relevant to the country's disease pattern or level of care that is available, and may be unknown by the local medical personnel.
- Many drugs arrive unsorted and labelled in a language, which is not easily understood.
- Some drugs arrive without an International Non-proprietary Name (INN or generic) on the packaging, which can cause confusion.
- The donor may sometimes ignore local administrative procedures for receiving and distributing medical supplies. The distribution plan of the donor may conflict with that of the national authorities.
- Donated drugs often have a high-declared value. In such cases, import taxes and overheads for storage and distribution may be unnecessarily high and the (inflated) value of the donation may be deducted from the government drug budget.

- Drugs may be donated in the wrong quantities and some stocks may have to be destroyed. This is wasteful and creates problems of disposal at the receiving end.
- Sometimes products, which require special storage conditions, are sent as normal products. These products have to be destroyed.

What can be done?

The donor and the Government of Vanuatu must get together as equal partners to work out how the effort and goodwill involved in making a donation can be put to best use. Vanuatu will have a clear policy on our requirements, which will be known to staff as well as donors. The right to give and receive a “no, thank you”, should be used, appreciated and accepted. The donor should appreciate a refusal (or acceptance) that is justified by a comprehensive statement of requirement.

To help build a comprehensive policy, the following summary list of criteria may be useful. By working through this list, it should make it easier to decide whether or not to make a particular donation. However, each partner needs to understand what is expected of him or her and what is expected of his or her counterpart.

DONATION OF RETURNED DRUGS

The donating of returned drugs (unused drugs returned to a pharmacy for safe disposal, or free samples given to health professionals) is an example of double standards. In most countries their use would not be permitted due to quality control regulations. Apart from quality respects, such donations also frustrate management attempts to administer drug stocks in a rational way. Prescribers are confronted with many different drugs in many different brands in ever changing dosages. As a consequence, patients’ treatment may suffer if the same drug is not available the next time it is needed. For this reason, this type of donation is actively discouraged in Vanuatu.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE DONATION CRITERIA

There are 4 core principles of the criteria for donation of drugs. These are:

1. Maximum benefit to the recipient
2. Respect for the wishes and authority of the recipient
3. No double standards in quality
4. Effective communication between the donor and the recipient.

Explanations

- 1) To receive maximum benefit, the donation should be in line with the expressed **current** needs of Vanuatu. Unsolicited donations are discouraged, as they are usually inappropriate.
- 2) By respecting the wishes of the Government of Vanuatu, donations are more likely to be supportive of health policy and administrative arrangements. This again will give increased benefit to the people of Vanuatu.
- 3) Quality is an important issue in any health service. All medical teams want to give the best possible care with the available resources. The donation of drugs where there is a question mark over the quality of the product either due to storage or expiration is unacceptable. If the product would not be used in a developed country due to safety concerns, it will not be used in Vanuatu. Expired drugs are destroyed representing a significant loss in freight charges to the donor for no gain to Vanuatu.
- 4) Donations should be based on expressed need and should not be sent unannounced as this creates work scheduling and transport problems. Documentation should be complete.

SUMMARY LIST OF CRITERIA - DRUG DONATIONS

VANUATU

WHICH DRUGS?

Donated drugs should be those which can be found on one of 2 lists:

- The National Essential Drug List for Vanuatu in the current edition
- The Supplementary List compiled by the Principal Pharmacist & the doctors of Vanuatu.

Both lists can be obtained upon request.

Strength and unit size (where specified) should be the same to minimise the opportunity for errors when giving medication.

PACKAGING?

Packaging of the pharmaceuticals must be of good quality, suitable for use in a tropical country. It must offer protection against sunlight and moisture, and should be a sturdy container.

LABELLING?

All labelling should be in any of the 3 national languages. Other languages are unacceptable. Drugs should be labelled with their International Non-proprietary Name (INN), expiry date, batch number, dosage form, strength, manufacturer and storage conditions.

EXPIRY DATE?

All donations of medication or materials that are subject to expiry dates should be received in Vanuatu with a minimum of 12 months remaining. Due to distribution lead times, short dated products have often expired by the time they reach their destination.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

Donations should be certified to BP., Eur.P., U.S.P., or WHO (WHO Certification Scheme on the Quality of Pharmaceutical Products Moving in International Commerce) standards. Australian, French and New Zealand registered products are also acceptable.

PACKAGE SIZE

In general, large quantity packages are more useful than small quantity units. Central Medical Stores are able to produce smaller pack sizes when required. Larger pack sizes give more medication for the same weight and outer carton size due to decreased amounts of packaging.

FINANCE

Financial donations are just as useful as medical donations (e.g. the likely freight charge).

Office of the Principal Pharmacist, Ministry of Health, Port Vila, Vanuatu

GENERAL DRUG DONATION GUIDELINES

FREIGHT CHARGES

Freight and customs charges should be met by the donor and not by the Government of Vanuatu.

DOCUMENTATION

Donations should arrive in Vanuatu with sufficient documentation to allow the Central Medical Stores personnel to process the donation through customs. This includes:

- Import authorisations where necessary e.g. with products under International Control such as psychotropic or narcotic drugs (A separate policy exists for disaster relief).
- A packing list for each numbered carton, including name of the drug, dosage form, strength, manufacturer, container quantity, storage conditions and expiry date.
- A declaration that the packages are a donation and are therefore not liable for tax.
- An indication of total cost based on the generic price converted into Vatu (For import duty exemption only)

CUSTOMS CLEARANCE

Donations should pass through customs in Port Vila even if the donation is intended for another health facility in Vanuatu. Failure to do this may, depending upon the circumstances, be considered by customs to be illegal importation.

DONATIONS TO SPECIFIC HEALTH FACILITIES

If the donation is intended for one particular health facility, this should be made clear on all paperwork relating to the donation and on the boxes themselves. If you intend the donation to go to one particular health facility, onward freight charges must be paid for either in advance or a cheque sent for the full amount under separate cover. Should this not occur, Central Medical Stores reserves the right to put the donation into stock to be used at any health facility in Vanuatu

PRE SHIPMENT CLEARANCE

All donations of drugs or medical materials should be cleared before shipment. Please contact the Office of the Principal Pharmacist (or, if unavailable, that of the Medical Services Manager at Vila Central Hospital). This will enable the donation to be processed as quickly as possible and will assist in the reduction of storage fees for the donor.

CONTACTS NAMES AND ADDRESSES

Principal Pharmacist, PP

Ms Agnes Mathias, (Acting PP)

PMB 9042,

Port Vila

Email : magnes@vanuatu.gov.vu

Medical Services Manager,

Dr Jimmy Obed,

PMB 9013,

Port Vila

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Central Medical Store Manager,

Mr Wilson Lilip,

PMB 9101,

Port Vila

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CHECKLIST FOR DONORS OF
DRUGS AND MEDICAL MATERIALS

- Is the item you want to donate on the National Essential Drug list for Vanuatu or on the supplementary list?
- Is the packaging robust, and suitable for a tropical climate?
- Is the labelling on the product in English?
- Does the product label show the International Non-proprietary Name?
- Does the product label show the batch number?
- Does the product label show the dosage form?
- Does the product label show the storage conditions?
- Does the product label show the quantity in the container?
- Does the product have at least 12 months of expiry date remaining?
- Do the products conform to BP, Eur.P., USP., or WHO quality standards?
- Has the Principal Pharmacist (or the Medical Services Manager in Port Vila) approved the donation?
- Are all freight charges to be met by the donor?
- When necessary, has an import certificate been issued?
- Is a packing list enclosed with donation?
- Has a packing list been sent separately to the Principal Pharmacist (or Medical Services Manager)?
- Declaration of donation sent to Vanuatu?
- Donation to pass through customs in Port Vila first?
- Any onward costs being paid for by the donor? Cheque despatched?

The answers to all these questions should be yes.