



**Queensland  
Government**  
Queensland Health

# MEMORANDUM

---

**To:** Dr P. Miach, Director of Medicine

**Copies to:** Ms R. Pollock, NUM Renal Dialysis Unit

**From:** Dr D. Keating, Director of Medical Services

**Contact No:** 4150 2210

**Fax No:** 4150 2029

**Subject:** **Protocol Changes**

**Date:** 23 Sep 2003

**File Ref:**

---

Dear Peter

Please find attached a copy of recommendations made to Bundaberg Health Service District in relation a medicolegal case involving excess gentamicin dosages.

You are requested to implement the suggested changes in order that to help reduce the likelihood of recurrence. The Medicine Clinical Services Forum may be a suitable forum to begin this process.

Upon implementation, you are requested to confirm in writing that the changes have occurred.

Regards

Dr Darren Keating  
**Director of Medical Services**

## RISK MANAGEMENT

Our discussion with Dr Whitby has highlighted some matters which may be of interest to your hospital in considering risk management issues arising from this claim. (1)

Dr Whitby was concerned that the hospital's peritonitis protocol provides for administration of Gentamicin for up to 14 days. As discussed above, he pointed out that Gentamicin can have an accumulative affect in the bloodstream of patients with peritonitis. He suggested that the protocol should provide for Gentamicin to be added to the first couple of morning bags of dialysis fluid, up to a maximum of one week. (1)

Further, Dr Whitby suggests that a preferred documentation practice is to record individual Gentamicin dosages for each day on the same sheet in the chart. This more readily allows for comparison of dosages by medical and nursing staff and early identification of overdosing errors. (1)

Obviously, a Gentamicin Therapeutic Monitoring Protocol form should also have been completed for this patient and the absence of this document contributed to the delay in diagnosing the overdose. Our discussions with your staff members indicate that there may be some confusion as to whether it is a responsibility of medical or nursing staff to complete this document. (1)

Yours faithfully

**MINTER ELLISON**



Contact: Miranda Hoban Direct phone: +61 7 3119 6469 Direct fax: +61 7 3119 1469  
E.mail: miranda.hoban@minterellison.com  
Senior associate: Shane Evans Direct phone: +61 7 3119 6450  
Partner responsible: Simon Alroe Direct phone: +61 7 3119 6169  
Our reference: MH SJA 4225436