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HSA Circular No. 01/2025

9 July 2025

Emergency Departments, Urgent Care Centres & Department of Psychiatry of Public Healthcare Institutions

National Addictions Management Services Centre in Institute of Mental Health

PROVISION OF INFORMATION ON THE USE AND ADVERSE EFFECTS OF ETOMIDATE IN E-VAPORISERS PURSUANT TO SECTION 36(1) OF THE HEALTHCARE SERVICES ACT 2020

In Mar 2025, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that etomidate and its analogues have been notably detected in illicit drug markets in East and South-East Asia. Similarly, between 2024 & 2025, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) have observed a concerning increase in the number of e-vaporisers detected to contain etomidate in Singapore. Some users of these products have exhibited etomidate-related adverse effects, such as the loss of motor coordination, confusion, dizziness and slurred speech.

2 In view of the rising concerns of etomidate use in e-vaporisers, MOH and HSA are in the process of studying the harm and addictiveness of etomidate use in e-vaporisers through individuals who seek medical attention at the Emergency Departments, Urgent Care Centres or the Psychiatry Departments of the Public Healthcare Institutions or National Addictions Management Service in the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). These studies will inform and shape MOH and HSA' policy on etomidate use in e-vaporisers going forward, including whether existing regulations and license conditions issued under the Healthcare Services Act 2020 need to be tightened or amended to ensure overall patient health, safety and welfare.

3 If any registered medical practitioners in your institution come across any individuals with a history of e-vaporiser use and any of the following signs and symptoms suggestive of etomidate intoxication, we request for your medical practitioners to record all suspected/confirmed etomidate vaping cases in your Electronic Medical Records (EMR) system, using the **SNOMED code (1308723 - Adverse Effect to Etomidate) in the patient's diagnosis code**. The signs and symptoms to look out for are as follow:



- i. Central Nervous System Effects
 - Sedation or loss of consciousness
 - Dizziness, confusion
 - Slurred speech
 - Motor incoordination
 - Myoclonus (involuntary muscle jerks)
 - Seizures
- ii. Respiratory Effects
 - Respiratory depression or apnea
 - Coughing or choking from inhaled irritants
 - Bronchospasm or laryngospasm
 - Hypoxia or cyanosis
- iii. Cardiovascular Effects
 - Hypotension
 - Bradycardia
 - Arrhythmias (especially if hypoxia develops)
- iv. Pulmonary/Chemical Injury
 - Chemical pneumonitis or acute lung injury from inhalation of non-volatile compounds or additives used in e-cigarette liquid
 - Thermal injury to airways

4 We understand that individuals may be concerned that they could be singled out for enforcement action regarding their use of e-vaporisers. Medical practitioners, when managing these patients, should reassure them that enforcement actions will not be taken against them for previous e-vaporiser use when they voluntarily come forward to seek medical assistance in this episode.

5 During the medical consultation, in addition to the reporting through SNOMED code in Para 3, the medical practitioners should also perform the following:

- i. Request for the patient to surrender their e-vaporisers, if any. Confiscated e-vaporisers should be kept in a ziplock bag and kept under lock and key. Please follow the work instructions in Annex to inform HSA in the collection of the e-vaporisers.
- ii. Consider sending urine samples to HSA's Toxicology Laboratory for toxicology testing, if clinically indicated. Please note that testing charges apply. The results of the urine test will subsequently be released to the medical practitioners for further patient management.

6 Members of the public who have sought assistance through the Health Promotion Board's smoking/vaping cessation phone counselling service, QuitLine, may be directed to seek medical advice and assessment at public health institutions' emergency departments if they are in a poor state of health and/or are experiencing serious adverse events during the counselling sessions. After patients experiencing serious adverse events have been treated, public health institutions' emergency departments may advise patients to seek / continue seeking continual support via QuitLine (1800 438 2000). Healthcare professionals may refer to the [ACE Clinical Guidance on Promoting smoking cessation and treating tobacco dependence](#) or scan the QR code provided for more information on how to support patients undergoing smoking/vaping cessation.



7 If there are any further queries / concerns, you can contact us at HSA-IS@hsa.gov.sg or 6866 1111.

Yours faithfully,



PROF KENNETH MAK
DIRECTOR-GENERAL HEALTH
MINISTRY OF HEALTH



ADJUNT ASSOC PROF RAYMOND CHUA
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY

ANNEX

**WORK INSTRUCTIONS FOR REFERRAL OF E-VAPORISERS CASES
TO HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY (HSA)**

1. If the patients are willing to surrender their e-vaporisers during their medical consultation, institutions can fill up the following [form](#) (or scan the QR Code below to access the form).



<https://go.gov.sg/hsakpodsreferral>

2. Upon receipt of the response via the form, HSA will conduct the necessary assessment and follow-up. HSA may write to the institutions to request for further information relating to the referral.
3. HSA will arrange with the respective institutions to collect the physical item(s) within 1 week of notification.
4. During the collection, HSA personnel will take over item(s) based on the information provided in the initial referral email and subsequent correspondence(s), if any. Acknowledgement slip(s) will be issued for all the item(s) taken over during the collection.