**Clinical Guideline for the Management of Adult Patients Appropriate for the Outpatient Parenteral Antimicrobial Therapy (OPAT) Service**

**Outpatient Parenteral Antibiotic Therapy (OPAT) Patient Information Leaflet**

**What is OPAT?**

Antibiotics are medications that are used to treat infectious conditions, particularly bacterial infections but also fungal and viral. These may be given by mouth or intravenously (IV). Occasionally they may be given intramuscularly. IV antibiotics are usually given to patients in hospital but, in certain conditions, they may be given at home. This is called outpatient parenteral antibiotic therapy (OPAT).

**How do you receive IV antibiotics?**

There are several ways for IV antibiotics to be administered. The simplest way is through a line called a cannula. This is a flexible hollow plastic tube which is inserted into the vein using a needle. The needle is removed, and the cannula is left in place and secured using a dressing. There are alternatives if this method is not suitable. Your doctor or nurse will decide which one is most suitable for you, depending on your veins and how long you will need IV antibiotic therapy. They will provide you with the relevant information and explain how the line will be inserted.

**Do I have to remain in hospital, or can I be at home for my IV treatment?**

IV antibiotic therapy is usually initiated in hospital. Once established on treatment and if appropriated for the OPAT service the remainder of treatment can be given safely at home.

Occasionally it may be initiated to avoid admission to hospital entirely.

**When will I see a doctor?**

You will see a doctor frequently during the course of your treatment. If your GP has referred you to the OPAT service they will follow up your care. If a consultant at the hospital has started treatment, they will follow up your care. In any case you will be advised each time an appointment has been arranged for you to attend the doctor.

**Who will give me the IV antibiotics and care for my intravenous access?**

A specialist nurse will see you every day and give you the IV antibiotics. The nurse will also check your temperature, pulse and blood pressure and care for the cannula or other intravenous access. This involves flushing the line before and after giving the IV antibiotic, examining, and cleaning the exit site and changing the dressing as and when required.

**How can I help to care for my line?**

The exit site of the cannula will be covered by a transparent dressing and should be kept clean and dry to prevent infection. You should avoid excessive movement of the arm, or heavy lifting, as this may dislodge the line. If you notice any problems with your line, please contact your IV nurse as soon as possible.

**Can I have a bath/shower or go swimming?**

You can have a bath or shower provided that the line is kept clean and dry. The line should not be immersed in the bath. If the dressing becomes wet underneath, please let the OPAT nurse know. Swimming is not recommended because the line may become dislodged or infected.

**How is the line removed when it is no longer needed?**

A nurse or doctor will remove the line when it is no longer needed. A sterile dry dressing will be placed at the exit site to protect it. This can be removed after 24 hours.

**Benefits**

The benefit to you is that you will be able to be at home rather than in hospital during the course of your IV antibiotic therapy.

**Risks**

The risks of having outpatient IV antibiotic therapy are very low. You will be carefully assessed before you start the treatment and monitored by the IV antibiotic team while you are receiving your treatment.

**How will I know if something is wrong?**

Complications are rare, but you may experience a reaction to the IV antibiotic or a problem with the IV cannula, such as infection or blockage. It you develop a drug rash, diarrhoea or if you have concerns about the IV antibiotic or the IV cannula, please do not hesitate to contact the OPAT nurse or doctor for advice contact details are detailed below. If you develop a severe rash with swelling and/or difficulty breathing, call ‘999’ for an ambulance or to the nearest hospital Accident and Emergency Department.

**Alternatives**

The alternative to having OPAT is to remain in hospital for the duration of your antibiotic treatment.

**Contacts/Further Information**

OPAT Nurse: 07827 282721 Monday to Sunday 08:00 to 20:00

If outside of these hours, please contact out of hours helpline (111) in the first instance.