

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH — SYRINGE POLICY

2286. Dr A.D. Buti to the Minister for Health:

- (1) Can the Minister confirm that parents of children with cancer are being compelled to re-use syringes when administering prescribed drugs to their children because the parents are not being issued with sufficient number of syringes?
- (2) If this is the case, when was this policy instigated?
- (3) What is the rationale behind the policy?

**Dr K.D. Hames replied:**

- (1) Syringes used for cytotoxic medications are not re-used and parents are always supplied with a special purpose bin for the disposal of such syringes.

Parents are only asked to re-use syringes for the administration of oral solutions through nasal-gastric tubes. They are advised to thoroughly rinse the syringes after each use. Advice from the Department of Health is that this will not compromise patient safety and quality.

Hospitals are quite flexible on the supply of syringes and dispense them at the parent's request. That is, they are not inappropriately 'rationed' in terms of the syringes they are given.

The cost associated with supplying a new syringe for every oral dose of a drug for patients would be significant. As most patients are not on multiple oral drugs a day, the burden of rinsing syringes for oral medication use is not onerous for most parents.

- (2) There is no specific state-wide or hospital-wide policy on the supply of syringes on discharge.
- (3) Not applicable.