

# Improving Consumer Health Literacy in the Northern Territory- Antimicrobial fact sheets

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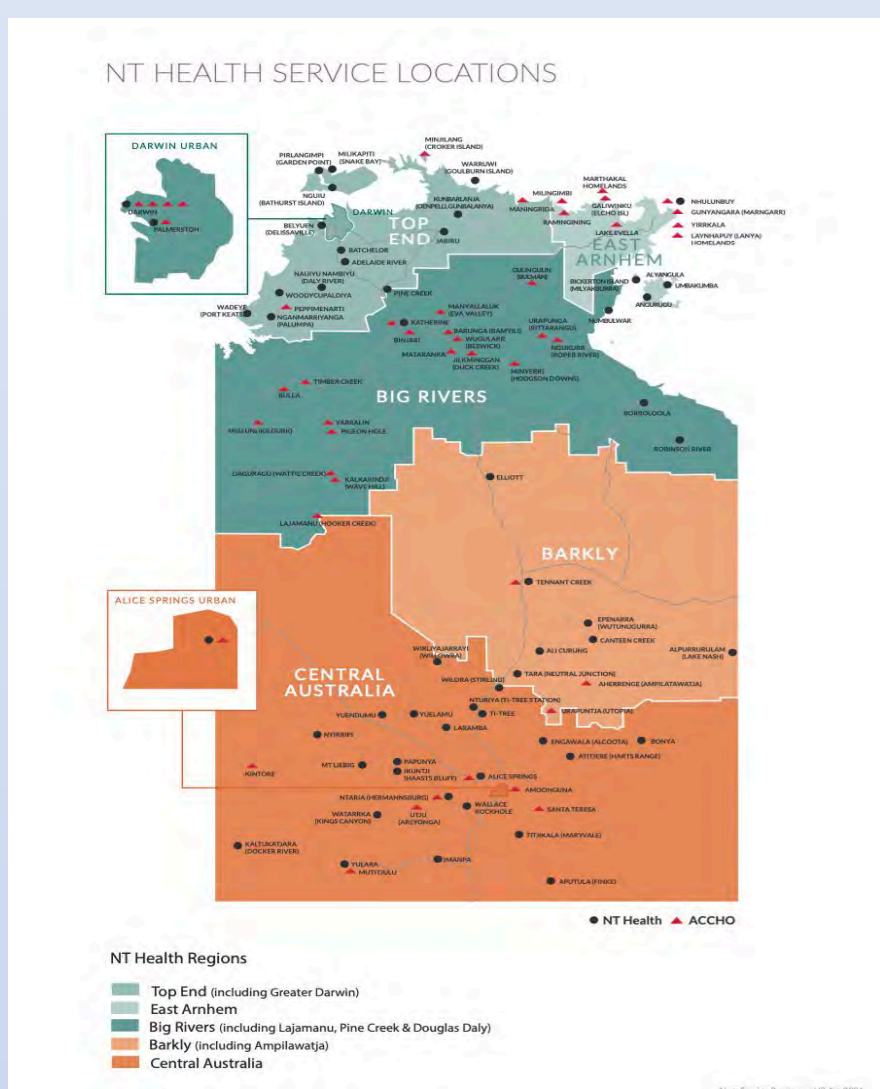
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## Background

- The Northern Territory (NT) Regional Health Service consists of five distinct geographical areas (refer to Figure 1)<sup>1</sup>.
- One of the biggest challenges faced in the NT in engaging with consumers is poor health literacy and engaging with consumers of linguistically diverse backgrounds in a culturally safe way.
- Evidence has demonstrated that approximately 60% of the Australian population have low health literacy<sup>3</sup>.
- The rates in First Nations people is unknown, however anticipated to be lower<sup>4</sup>.
- This intervention was intended to improve antimicrobial health literacy for consumers through the provision of plain English fact sheets (PEFS) contributing to National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Partnering with Consumers Standard<sup>2</sup>.
- Prior to this intervention all information provided to consumers on antimicrobials across the health system was above a grade eight readability.

## Figure 1:

Map of the NT Health Service<sup>1</sup>



## Objectives

- To improve antimicrobial health literacy through the provision of PEFS.
- The intention wasn't to replace verbal counselling, however to re-enforce key messages provided by clinicians.

## Actions

The antimicrobial PEFS were developed by the Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) Team working in Top End Health Service from a range of pharmaceutical references. These fact sheets were all consumer tested. The AMS Team has developed several antimicrobial consumer leaflets on the following topics: ciprofloxacin, gentamicin, vancomycin, antimicrobial resistance, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) exposure treatment, oseltamivir and trimethoprim/sulfamethoxazole (refer to Figure 2). A wide range of clinicians have contributed to the antimicrobial PEFS over a 3-year period.

## Figure 2:

Examples of Antimicrobial fact sheets- Vancomycin & Ciprofloxacin



## Evaluation

- The PEFS all have a grade eight readability or lower and were reviewed and approved by the Health Service AMS and Health Literacy Committees.
- These fact sheets are available for clinicians on the Health Services intranet AMS home page.
- The fact sheets will be reviewed every 3 years as outlined in the NT Clinical Documents Guideline<sup>5</sup>.

## Discussion

- Antimicrobial fact sheets are being used in combination with verbal counselling provided by clinicians at the time of prescribing to improve consumer understandings of antimicrobials.
- There is a plan to develop a wider range of fact sheets in the future.
- Improving health literacy is a critical component to engaging with consumers resulting in improved health outcomes<sup>2</sup>.
- Evidence has demonstrated that written information on antimicrobials can improve consumer adherence and knowledge<sup>6</sup>.

## References

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