



Issue: Abbreviations for Medical Record Documentation

Raised by: RANs (CA Remote Health)

Background: A perception that unfamiliar abbreviations / acronyms are increasingly being used in documentation in client medical records. There is risk that this fosters a widening gap of understanding re acronyms and abbreviations used across disciplines, and unnecessary confusion among clinical staff members.

Discussion: There are numerous lists of accepted abbreviations for use in healthcare. However, along with increasing knowledge and growth of specialist areas, comes an increasing vocabulary (with associated abbreviations).

Although there is a growth of specialist areas in healthcare, not all abbreviations are deemed necessary (or helpful) across all health specialties. An abbreviation used in one discipline or specialty sometimes has an entirely different meaning in another specialty. For example, 'TOP' (termination of pregnancy) and 'Top' (topical application); or 'FBC' (for either full blood count or fluid balance chart), etc. Sometimes however, an abbreviation simply reflects the most popularised language used locally to describe an event which may in fact differ in another locality (again unhelpful in the wider context), thus adding to confusion.

DHF hosts a number of intranet based documents containing lists of abbreviations, the most significant being the *RDH Evidenced-Based Manual for Nursing Practice* which contains an extensive list. However, this list is greater than that required for Remote Health.

To provide a more succinct list of abbreviations for Remote Health clinical staff to reference and also to provide a list that is authorised for use in medical documentation, Remote Health has established an authorised list. This is posted on the Remote Health ATLAS Acronyms & Abbreviations List page.

Consultation: N/A

References: [The Royal Darwin Hospital Evidenced-Based Manual for Nursing Practice](#) pp951-969 (Review date January 2010);

[DHF Drug abbreviations](#);

[Common abbreviations](#) (ASH Acute Care 2007)

Outcome: Remote Health has endorsed an Abbreviations List indicating acceptable abbreviations to be used in medical record documentation. The list is posted on the following Remote Health ATLAS page:

http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Remote_Health_Atlas/Contents/Acronyms_and_Abbreviations_List/index.aspx

Links to Abbreviations Lists used in other areas of DHF are also included on the Atlas site to assist interpretation of documents arising elsewhere.