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| Chief Psychiatrist’s Clinical Practice Advisory Notice Chief Psychiatrist’s guideline: *Criteria for searches to maintain safety in an inpatient unit: for patients, visitors and staff* May 2018 |
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**Purpose**

* The Chief Psychiatrist has previously issued the guideline *Criteria for searches to maintain safety in an inpatient unit: for patients, visitors and staff*.
* The Victorian Coroner recently made a recommendation to the Chief Psychiatrist in relation to the search of electronic devices such as Kindles for dangerous items e.g. razor blades hidden in the cover of devices.
* The Chief Psychiatrist is issuing this advisory notice to alert mental health services to update their policies for searches in inpatient units of electronic devices such as Kindles, tablets, mobile phones and laptops for dangerous items hidden in their cover.

**Background**

* A young woman was admitted to the high dependency unit of an acute inpatient unit. She presented with suicidal thoughts and was a compulsory patient under the *Mental Health Act, 2014*.
* As part of the admission process, her property was searched and several items including her Kindle were removed. Later in the day, she asked for her Kindle to be returned and it was provided to her.
* Next day, on a routine nursing observation check she was discovered in a pool of blood in the ensuite of her bedroom. A code blue was called but she could not be resuscitated. The cause of death was hypovolaemic shock as a result of an incised injury to the wrist using a razor blade.
* The Coroner’s investigation confirmed that the patient had previously secreted the razor blade in the cover of the Kindle in her possession. The razor blade was not discovered in the search of her belongings upon admission to the inpatient unit.

**Recommendation**

* Mental health services must inform their staff about appropriate searches of all electronic devices for dangerous items such as razor blades, other sharp objects or loose button batteries. Ingesting a loose button battery has been known to be fatal in many cases involving children.
* The search should include removal of electronic items from their cover to identify any dangerous items.
* This notice should be read in conjunction with the current Guideline. Mental health services should update their policies and procedures accordingly.

**Dr Neil Coventry**

Chief Psychiatrist

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