

## Outpatient parenteral antimicrobial therapy (OPAT): Update on progress in Scotland

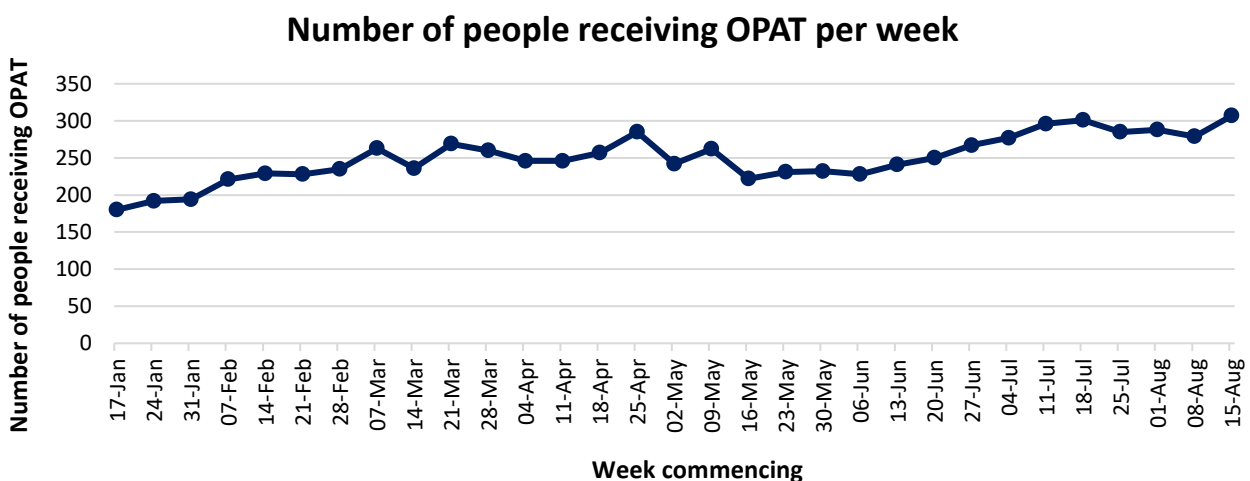
OPAT provides an alternative to hospital admission for people with a range of infections that require treatment with intravenous or complex oral antimicrobials. It is a multidisciplinary patient centred clinical service that prevents admission for some and supports early discharge for others. Currently nine health boards in Scotland provide an OPAT service and, in addition, one island board provides OPAT as part of a hospital at home service.

The [Scottish Antimicrobial Prescribing Group \(SAPG\) OPAT group](#) was formed in 2019 to enable OPAT providers in Scotland to collaborate together to share best practice, promote quality improvement and explore and develop reliable systems to capture and visualise local and national OPAT activity. The group has developed [OPAT key performance indicators](#) that outline the principles of best care for patients and a national [OPAT skin and soft tissue infections \(SSTIs\) pathway](#) for local adaptation and use throughout Scotland.

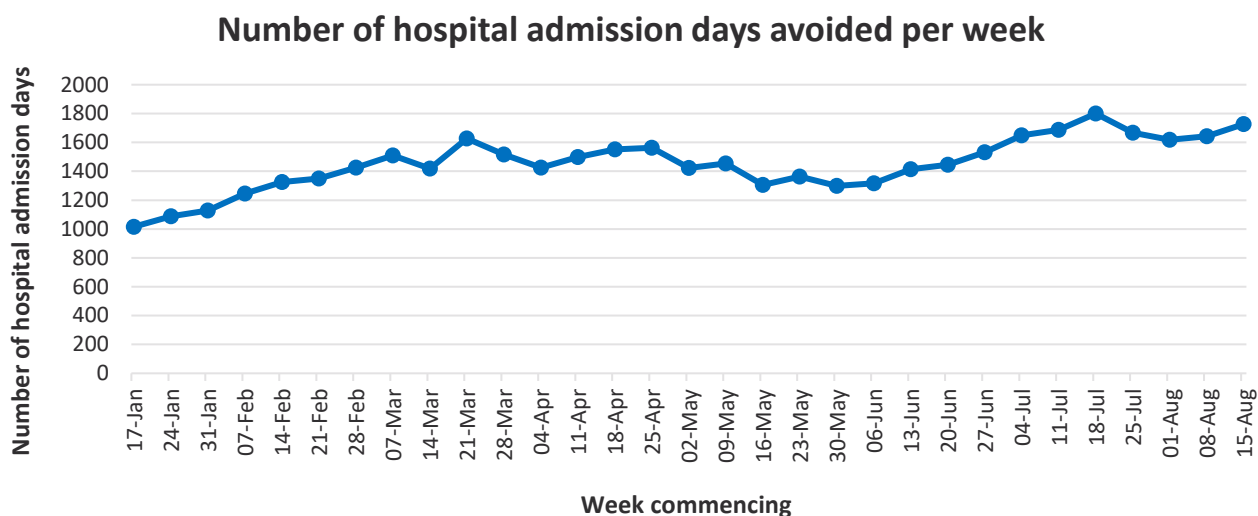
The COVID-19 pandemic and current pressures on acute hospital services have highlighted the need to provide an alternative to treatment in a hospital setting, where possible. This aligns with national initiatives to [deliver the right care in the right setting](#) and to reduce risk of healthcare associated infections. As part of the Scottish government's acute interface care and virtual capacity initiatives within the urgent and unscheduled care collaborative, an OPAT clinical network was formed to support OPAT service expansion across NHS Scotland and improve data intelligence. This network works alongside the SAPG OPAT group, which provides governance and guidance on antimicrobial prescribing.

The OPAT clinical network has collected weekly activity data since 17 January 2022. Data collected up to and including 21 August 2022 are represented in the figures below. On average 250 people have received OPAT per week (*Figure 1*) and an average of 1,453 hospital admission days have been avoided per week (*Figure 2*). Overall approximately 45,031 hospital admission days have been avoided as a result of OPAT services across Scotland. Recent data shows ongoing increases in activity.

**Figure 1: Weekly number of people receiving OPAT (January to August 2022)\***



**Figure 2: Weekly number of hospital admission days avoided (January to August 2022)\***



\*OPAT activity is calculated based on total number of people attending for care as an alternative to hospital admission per day. Those new to the service are added and those who have completed therapy are subtracted from daily counts. During this period a total of 1,733 unique patient episodes were recorded.

It is anticipated that over the next six months, as OPAT teams grow across Scotland and the SAPG OPAT SSTI pathway is rolled out, that there will be further increases in OPAT clinical activity. Work is underway to develop OPAT virtual wards to support the automation of data collection, including key performance indicator data, to reduce the administrative tasks associated with the delivery of OPAT. Work is also ongoing to complete SAPG OPAT antimicrobial prescribing good practice guidance and formalise national audits of OPAT practice.

**Acknowledgements**

Thanks to the participating boards: NHS Dumfries and Galloway, NHS Fife, NHS Forth Valley, NHS Grampian, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Highland, NHS Lanarkshire, NHS Lothian, NHS Tayside and NHS Western Isles. Thanks also to the members of the Scottish OPAT clinical network, SAPG OPAT group and the Scottish government acute interface care group.

**Further information**

For further information about the OPAT clinical network and national data collection please contact Dr R Andrew Seaton, SAPG chair, via [his.sapg@nhs.scot](mailto:his.sapg@nhs.scot)

**Table of Abbreviations**

- OPAT Outpatient parenteral antimicrobial therapy
- SAPG Scottish Antimicrobial Prescribing Group
- SSTI Skin and soft tissue infection