Getting Infection Right First Time

Example prescription for nitrofurantoin modified release (MR) orally (PO) 100mg twice a day (BD) for Florence

Nitrofurantoin is an oral antibiotic that is rapidly excreted in the urine where its antibacterial effect is employed. The concentrations in the blood of the drug are too low for this antibiotic to be used in systemic infections, including pyelonephritis.

It is not suitable to use in patents with renal impairment (crcl <45ml/min) as cannot achieve adequate concentrations, and there is increased risk of adverse effects. Whilst taking nitrofurantoin, the urine may become coloured dark yellow or brown. This is normal, and is not a reason to stop taking the medicine.

Prescribe on the initial section of the drug chart and circle probable (infection most likely) or possible (infection is not the most likely diagnosis).

When antibiotics are started, the diagnosis usually isn't certain. Often, antibiotics are started to treat a possible infection and should be stopped through "review and revise" when infection is ruled out or a different diagnosis is made. The decision aid provides a way to categorise antibiotic prescriptions when they are first written so that health care workers all know more about why antibiotics were given and whether or not they can be changed later.

Documentation of the indication is important to help prescribers make informed decisions when deciding on the ongoing plan for antibiotic treatment. This also highlights to the team the rationale for antibiotic use.