

SUMMARY OF CONTROLS ON THE PRESCRIBING AND HANDLING OF DRUGS OF DEPENDENCE BY MEDICAL, NURSE AND MIDWIFE PRACTITIONERS

The prescribing and handling of all prescription medicines (Schedules 4 and 8 of the NSW Poisons List made under the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act) are subject to a range of requirements under the above legislation. These requirements include the particulars that must appear on the prescription, such as adequate directions for use and the number of repeats if the prescription is to be dispensed more than once. The interval between repeats does not need to be specified on the prescription except where indicated in the following groups.

The **general requirements** for the prescribing and handling of prescription medicines are detailed in the NSW Ministry of Health's "Guide to Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Legislation for Medical, Nurse and Midwife Practitioners and Dentists" (TG12). For access to this and other useful guides see "Further Information" at the end of this guide.

However, certain drugs are liable to abuse and consequently their prescribing and handling are subject to additional requirements commensurate with their relative potential for abuse, as set out below.

GROUP 1

- benzodiazepines, when included in Schedule 4 of the NSW Poisons List
- dextropropoxyphene, when included in Schedule 4 of the NSW Poisons List
- diethylpropion
- ephedrine
- methylphenobarbitone
- phenobarbitone
- phentermine
- pipradrol, except when in compounded preparations containing 0.01% or less
- pseudoephedrine when included in Schedule 4 of the NSW Poisons List

Requirements applicable to the above drugs additional to the general requirements

- (a) The loss or theft of any of these drugs must be reported to Pharmaceutical Services by completing the online 'Notification of Loss or Theft of Accountable Drugs (S8 and S4D substances)' located on the Internet at: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pharmaceutical/Pages/lost-stolen-drugs.aspx>

Where theft has occurred it is advisable to also notify the police.

- (b) There is an obligation on a patient requesting a practitioner to supply or prescribe any of these drugs to disclose the amount of that drug or any other of the above drugs that they have been prescribed or supplied over the last 2 months. When such a request is made, if the information is not voluntarily disclosed by the patient, it is appropriate to ask them directly and, in any case, record the response on the patient's file.

- (c) A full record of any prescription written for these drugs or any supply of them must be made in the patient's file, including the date, the name, strength and quantity of the drug prescribed or supplied, the number of repeats ordered (if any) and the directions for use as written on the prescription. **Prescriptions are valid for six months only.**

GROUP 2

- amylobarbitone, when packed and labelled for injection
- anabolic and androgenic steroidal agents included in Schedule 4 of the NSW Poisons List (for example, such preparations as Andriol®, Decadurabolin®, Primobolan®, Primoteston Depot®, Proviron®, and Sustanon®)
- pentobarbitone, when packed and labelled for injection

Requirements applicable to the above drugs additional to the general requirements AND those set out for Group 1

- (d) Where repeats are ordered, the practitioner is required to indicate on the prescription, and in the prescription record, the time interval between repeat dispensing. If no interval is shown, the pharmacist may dispense the prescription once only and then cancel it.
- (e) Prescriptions must be retained at the pharmacy where first dispensed and cannot be returned to the patient. Where repeats are ordered, the patient must return for repeat dispensing to the pharmacy at which the prescription was first dispensed. This has been shown to cause minimal inconvenience.

GROUP 3

- All drugs of addiction (Schedule 8 of the Poisons List).

Requirements applicable to the above drugs additional to the general requirements AND those set out for Groups 1 and 2

- (f) No other preparation may be written on the same prescription form.
- (g) The quantity prescribed must be written in both words and figures.
- (h) May not be prescribed or supplied for a person known or suspected by the prescriber to be a drug dependent person^{*} without the written authority of the NSW Ministry of Health, except for the treatment of a drug dependent person as an in-patient in a hospital for a period not exceeding 14 consecutive days following admission. (See also Group 4.)
- (i) Any such drug coming into the possession of a practitioner (including emergency bag supply) must be recorded in a drug register together with any quantity held for, supplied to or administered to a patient. They must be stored apart from all other goods (other than cash or documents) in a safe, cupboard or drawer in a cabinet that is securely attached to the premises and kept

^{*} A drug dependent person means a person who has acquired, as a result of repeated administration of:

(a) a drug of addiction, or

(b) a prohibited drug within the meaning of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985,

an overpowering desire for the continued administration of such a drug.

Section 27 - Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 1966

locked when not in immediate use. Emergency supplies may be carried in a bag that is locked away when not in immediate use.

- (j) Drugs of addiction may not be wilfully destroyed. If they are no longer needed or outdated they may be destroyed, but only by or under the supervision of an authorised officer of the NSW Ministry of Health or by a police officer.

GROUP 4

- dexamphetamine
- lisdexamfetamine (Vyvanse®)
- methylphenidate (Concerta®, Ritalin®, Ritalin LA®)

Requirements applicable to the above drugs additional to the general requirements AND those set out for Groups 1, 2 and 3

- (k) These drugs may not be prescribed for any person without the prior written authority of the NSW Ministry of Health.

GROUP 5

- a drug of addiction that is packed and labelled for injection
- buprenorphine (except transdermal patches)
- alprazolam (expected to be in force from 1 February 2014)
- flunitrazepam
- hydromorphone
- methadone

Requirements applicable to the above drugs additional to the general requirements AND those set out for Groups 1, 2 and 3

- (l) May not be prescribed or supplied for therapeutic use for any person, not considered to be drug dependent, continuously for more than two months (including any known previous supply by other practitioners) without the written authority of the NSW Ministry of Health.

(See under group 3 at (h) for requirements for persons considered to be drug dependent.)

WARNING

Drug dependent persons use a variety of very persuasive approaches in attempting to obtain prescriptions for drugs of dependence from practitioners and there is a need to be alert to the possibility of an imposition when confronted by a new patient who nominates, directly or indirectly, the drug they want, irrespective of the reason advanced. Brochures outlining the tactics used by drug dependent persons to obtain prescriptions and suggestions on how to deal with suspected impositions, are available from Pharmaceutical Services: Recognising and Handling Drug Dependent Persons - Notes for Medical Practitioners and Recognising and Handling Patients Liable to Abuse Benzodiazepines - Notes for Medical Practitioners (see Further Information, below).

FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information and copies of the latest versions of the following brochures may be obtained by contacting the Duty Pharmaceutical Officer during office hours on (02) 9391 9944 or visiting the Pharmaceutical Services website at:

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pharmaceutical>

Title	Document No.
Criteria for the Diagnosis and Management of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Adults	TG 190
Criteria for the Diagnosis and Management of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in Children and Adolescents	TG 181
Prescribing of Benzodiazepines Alprazolam and Flunitrazepam	TG 204
* Recognising and Handling Patients Liable to Abuse Benzodiazepines	TG 199
Anabolic/Androgenic Steroids - Information for Medical Practitioners	TG 197
Guidelines for the Management of Patients with Chronic Non-Cancer Pain	TG 202
Guide to Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Legislation for Medical, Nurse and Midwife Practitioners and Dentists	TG 12
Requirements for an Authority to Prescribe Drugs of Addiction under Section 28 of the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act	TG 212
Drugs of Addiction (Schedule 8)	TG 13
Schedule 4 Appendix D Drugs ("Prescribed restricted substances")	TG 14
* Recognising and Handling Drug Dependent Persons - Notes for Medical Practitioners	TG 116A

* These guides are not published on the Internet. Contact Pharmaceutical Services for a copy.

This guide has been produced by:

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