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To: All Pharmacists

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RE: INFORMATION NOTICE

Continued Dispensing Initiative

In the Northern Territory (NT) 'Continued Dispensing' according to the PBS system is permitted, but a similar permission is not in place for privately funded and non-PBS prescriptions.

See Information sheet on this webpage:

<https://health.nt.gov.au/professionals/medicines-and-poisons-control2/pharmacists-and-schedule-8-medicines>

Covid-19 infection control

An information sheet for community pharmacies is on this webpage:

<https://health.nt.gov.au/professionals/medicines-and-poisons-control2/pharmacists-and-schedule-8-medicines>

Please also see the information for businesses available from:

<https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au/>

Imaged based prescriptions

- NT legislation (*Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2012*) allows electronic processes, including prescribing, dispensing and record keeping.
- By following PBS processes pharmacists will not be contravening NT law (e.g. 'image based prescriptions' related to the temporary telehealth measures for Covid-19)
- Please see the information sheets on the Commonwealth Health website (for pharmacists, prescribers and patients):

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-national-health-plan-electronic-prescribing-a-guide-for-pharmacists>

- 'image based prescriptions' cannot be sent to or from patients – these prescriptions must go directly from the prescriber to the pharmacy.
- Please note that S8 and Appendix D substances are excluded from the temporary PBS 'image based prescription' measure.
- All prescriptions must comply with NT prescription rules e.g. signed by prescriber
- All pharmacists must be increasingly vigilant with prescriptions for 'desirable medications'.

- It is recommended that every pharmacy business develops a standard operating procedure for validation of prescriptions and dealing with potential forgeries. All pharmacists including locums need to be briefed on the validation requirements for the pharmacy.
- Remember that the PBS will not pay for dispensing of a forged/altered prescription! Put simply the pharmacy will be out of pocket.
- Pharmacists must also be aware of the potential social harms that these products can have in the community. Dispensing a forged/altered prescription puts more of these products out in the community leading to a greater risk of misuse, overdose or death.

Substitution

Pharmacists in NT 'supply a substance on prescription' after assessing the appropriateness of the medicine, obtaining more information and advice including speaking to the prescriber as needed, with the end result of providing the patient (or carer) with the medicine in an appropriate form with appropriate dosage instructions.

Medication shortages and availability of particular products and strengths must be taken into account as well as safety and acceptability to the patient.

A pharmacist in the NT is not committing an offence under the *Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Act 2012* if they substitute to a different dosage form than indicated on the prescription (e.g. capsules to liquid, 2 x 250mg capsules instead of 1 x 500mg capsule).

For further queries, please contact Medicines and Poisons Control on 89227341 or poisonscontrol@nt.gov.au

Yours sincerely

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Manager Medicines & Poisons Control