



## Policy

### ***DISTANCE DISPENSING***

The Pharmacists Board uses the term, DISTANCE DISPENSING, to describe the supply by pharmacists of medications to the public in those circumstances where there is no face to face contact with the patient by the pharmacist or a member of a pharmacy's staff. It covers mail order supply of prescriptions and scheduled products. Also included is the use of the Internet and in some instances the telephone and fax.

Recently a small number of pharmacists, including some from other states have been promoting their willingness to supply dispensed and other scheduled medication by distance dispensing to the public in areas where there is currently ready personal access to pharmaceutical services.

For the Pharmacists Board this development raises questions of whether such an activity is in the public interest or constitutes best pharmaceutical practice. To address its concerns the Board has formulated and adopted Guidelines for pharmacists undertaking distance dispensing<sup>@</sup>. As a matter of professional standards the Board expects Queensland pharmacists to comply with these Guidelines.

### ***GUIDELINES FOR DISTANCE DISPENSING (INCLUDES MAIL ORDER AND INTERNET SUPPLY OF DISPENSED MEDICATION AND SCHEDULED MEDICATION)***

The Board endorses the principles of the Quality Use of Medicines which encourages the direct and personal contact between a patient and the pharmacist as the most effective way to ensure the safe and correct use of medicine. The delivery of medication, prescriptions or scheduled items by mail or other courier service is therefore not encouraged except in cases of clear necessity.

In those cases where medications are supplied by mail order or similar procedures, directly to patients, the responsible pharmacist is required to fulfil all professional requirements to ensure the safe and correct use of the medicine, and to exercise proper and reasonable care in respect to that supply. This will ensure that patients thus supplied enjoy the same high quality of professional care that is available with the personal appearance by the patient or agent in a pharmacy.

In accordance with section 15(9) of the *Pharmacy By-law 1985* the advertising of mail order prescription services and mail order sales of scheduled drugs are prohibited unless otherwise approved by the Pharmacists Board

#### **PROTOCOL**

1. ***STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE***

Because there is no opportunity for face to face consultation with patients or their agents, which is a prime component of the Quality Use of Medicines, there is a greater potential for medication error or sub-optimal use.

Therefore the Board requires that all functions performed by either pharmacists or auxiliary staff of a pharmacy providing a mail order or similar service must be described by way of a written standard operating procedure designed to minimise dispensing errors.

2. ***PREMISES***

The premises from which a mail order dispensing or similar service takes place must comply with all the regulatory requirements relating to the practice of pharmacy.

### 3. *PATIENT MEDICATION RECORD*

A patient medication record must be kept for all patients and include the following information as a minimum:

- Patients full name;
- Address;
- Telephone number (if available);
- Name and telephone number of patient=s doctor;
- Age & sex;
- Medication history (at this pharmacy);
- Dates of prescriptions, dates of dispensing and name of dispensing pharmacist;
- Other relevant information such as known allergies etc.

In the case of new patients this information must be obtained by way of a comprehensive form or by the pharmacist telephoning the patient directly.

### 4. *DISPENSING*

Before dispensing, a PHARMACIST must assess each prescription and evaluate it in light of the patient=s medication record. In the case of any discrepancy, or concern with the prescription, the pharmacist must contact the client or failing that, the prescriber. In the case of faxed prescriptions the original document must be received prior to the release of the medication.

### 5. *REVIEWING*

After dispensing and before dispatch a PHARMACIST must check all details of the medication and prescription.

### 6. *INFORMATION & ADVICE*

On supply of each medication the pharmacist must ensure that sufficient information is given in relation to indications, dosage and possible adverse reactions so as to enable patients to make informed assessments of their medication. Each item must carry the appropriate Cautionary Labels. The obligations of the pharmacist in relation to the provision of Consumer Product Information (CPI) leaflets must be satisfied.

Each item must have complete information on dosage frequency, time of administration and method of use, either on the label or on a separate printed sheet.

If the directions on the prescription are “take as directed”, or other non-specific instruction, the pharmacist must take appropriate steps to ensure that the patient knows and understands that the effective instructions are:

Labelling must include:

- Name, strength and description of the medication;
- The dosage form, dose, route of administration and duration of therapy;
- Special directions applicable in special cases;
- Correct storage information, expiry date and batch number;
- Initials of the pharmacist taking responsibility.

Advice about telephone access at no more than the cost of a local call must be provided. A PHARMACIST must be available on that number to give information and advice in normal business hours, at least between the hours of 9.00 am and 6.00pm.

That pharmacist must have immediate access to prescription details and patient medical history.

***When, in the opinion of the pharmacist, direct counselling is desirable the pharmacist should contact the patient by telephone for that purpose.***

7. *PACKAGING & POSTING*

When practical all medication must be dispensed in child-resistant containers and the packaging must not indicate that the package contains a scheduled poison.

All medication must be despatched in packaging that is sufficient to ensure its safe arrival in good condition to the addressee. Special attention must be given to the storage requirements of temperature sensitive medication.

Packaging must comply with Australia Post requirements and conditions.

The pharmacy must keep a formal record of the date of despatch and address to which the medication was despatched.

A control system must be in place so that the pharmacist becomes aware that the medication has been received by the patient.

This might include requiring the patient to telephone the pharmacy on receipt, OR the pharmacist telephoning the patient after a suitable interval, OR the provision of a reply paid envelope for the patient to mail back on receipt of the medication, OR other acceptable procedures.

8. *OTHER LEGISLATION*

This protocol addresses proper professional practice and pharmacists' obligations under the PHARMACY ACT OF QUEENSLAND (1976 AS AMENDED). Pharmacists should also be aware of and address their obligations under the National Health Act, Poisons Regulations, or any other relevant legislation.