



<b>HEALTH PROFESSIONS LICENSING AUTHORITY</b>	
<b>TITLE: PRESCRIBING S8 AND S4 MEDICATIONS POLICY &amp; GUIDELINES</b>	
<b>EFFECTIVE DATE: JUNE 2008</b>	
<b>BOARD:</b>	<b>MEDICAL BOARD OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY</b>

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

Appropriate prescribing practice requires that a medical practitioner's customary prescribing conforms to proper patterns established by the medical practitioner's peers in similar practice. Inappropriate prescribing of drugs of dependence is unacceptable, both clinically and ethically.

### **Improper prescribing of addictive drugs**

The Board defines 'improper prescribing of drugs of dependence' as any prescribing of addictive drugs that deviates significantly from the practice of one's medical peers. Such prescribing practice may include, indiscriminate, excessive or reckless prescribing.

### **Background**

Inappropriate use of drugs of dependence is detrimental to the user; it impairs both behaviour and the health of the individual, which in turn impacts upon the wider community. The community, as well as the individuals experience the impact of inappropriate prescribing of drugs of dependence.

Every medical practitioner is bound by the ethics of the medical profession. It is unethical to provide any treatment that is illegal or detrimental to the health of the patient. Medical Practitioners should take care to prescribe drugs with the least likelihood of dependence and in a formulation least susceptible to abuse, whilst maintaining therapeutic benefit to the patient.

## **1. Responsibilities Of Medical Practitioners.**

- 1.1 Medical practitioners prescribing drugs of dependence to patients must endeavour to ensure the patient is not:
  - Dependant upon such drugs; or
  - Seeking such drugs to supply to other individuals who may be dependent upon such drugs.
- 1.2 When prescribing drugs of dependence medical practitioners should keep in mind the possible consequences to patients, including:
  - Overdoses;
  - Development or maintenance of a drug habit;
  - The diversion of drugs onto the street;
  - Social consequences including violence or crime; or
  - Mental health issues.
- 1.3 If a medical practitioner has any concern about issuing a prescription for a patient the Board recommends the practitioner consult with peers and / or the Department of Health and Community Services, Alcohol and Other Drugs Services see contact

details below. Where ever possible prescribers should prescribe the drug with the least likelihood of leading to dependence.

- 1.4 If a medical practitioner is threatened or intimidated by a patient to provide drugs of dependence for inappropriate use, the practitioner's first concern must be his or her own safety. As soon as the patient has left the medical practitioner he/she should contact the Police and provide a detailed description of the patient and whether or not a prescription was provided.

## 2. The Commonwealth And Drugs Of Dependence

A doctor may need to contact the Health Insurance Commission (HIC) before prescribing a Schedule 8 drug (drug of dependence), when the prescription is for more than the maximum Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBSA) quantity and/or number of repeats – e.g. for a terminally ill patient or for a patient requiring long term analgesia.

## 3. Prescribing Guidelines

Refer to the Board's Prescription Guideline available on the Board's website [www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards](http://www.nt.gov.au/health/registrationboards)

## 4. Alcohol And Other Drug Services Resources To Assist In Dealing With Patients Seeking Drugs Of Dependence Include But Are Not Limited To:

### NORTHERN TERRITORY

NT Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act; Schedule 8 and Restricted Schedule 4 Substances - Policy and Clinical Practice Guidelines Dept of Health and Community Services January 2005

[www.health.nt.gov.au](http://www.health.nt.gov.au)

### Top End

Alcohol and Other Drug Services, RDH	89228399
Alcohol Awareness and Family Recovery	89412211
Amity Community Services	89818030
Banyan House	89470832
Darwin Withdrawal Services	89480087
FORWAARD (for Aboriginal people)	89814199
Mental Health Services	89994988
Needle and Syringe Program	89411711
Royal Darwin Hospital	89228888

### Central

Alcohol and Drug Services, Central Australia, DHCS	89517580
DASA	89536070
TAHC	89533172
CAMHS	89517777

### NATIONAL

ADIS- Alcohol and Drug Information Service For patients, 24/7	1800131350
DACAS – Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory	1800111092
HIC – PBS	1800888333

<http://www.drugs.vic.gov.au/temazepam/links.htm>

National Prescribing Service <http://www.nps.org.au/topics/benzos.html>

Insomnia Management kit material <http://www.dhs.sa.gov.au/qum>

RACGP : Clinical Guidelines on Benzodiazepines <http://review.racgp.org.au>

Alcohol and Other drugs: A Handbook for Health Professionals Commonwealth of Australia 2004

[www.nceta.flinders.edu.au](http://www.nceta.flinders.edu.au)

*The Board recognises the Medical Council of New Zealand and the Medical Practitioners Board of Victoria for providing the basis of this policy content.*