

POISONS CONTROL INFORMATION SHEET

SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR PHARMACISTS

No. 300.1

The following is a short summary of the key elements of a framework for the supply of Schedule 8 (S8) substances, including pharmacotherapies.

Pharmacists need to familiarise themselves with all relevant provisions in the *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act*, *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Regulations* and the Schedule 8 and Restricted Schedule 4 Substances Policy and Clinical Practise Guidelines that may impact on the service to clients and ensure that it meets the terms of the legislation.

S8 substances are classified as either 'restricted' (buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone, methadone liquid, dexamphetamine and methylphenidate) or 'non-restricted' (eg morphine, oxycodone, pethidine, etc.)

The Chief Health Officer (CHO) may declare a Schedule 4 (S4) substance to be restricted and supply subject to special conditions. There are no restricted S4 substances at present.

The requirements for the supply of S8 and restricted S4 substances are described in the Guidelines which are issued by the Minister and published in the Gazette. Poisons Control, Department of Health and Families and a Clinical Advisory Committee monitor the supply of these substances. Non-compliance with the Guidelines constitutes an offence and may attract a penalty under the Act.

Supply of non-restricted Schedule 8 substances

Prescribers have to notify Poisons Control of the supply of non-restricted S8 substances (such as morphine, pethidine etc.) if supply exceeds 8 weeks, or if other circumstances arise, as described in the Guidelines. Medical practitioners also need a special authorisation if they want to prescribe for more than an approved number of patients.

Supply of restricted Schedule 8 substances buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone

Medical practitioners providing pharmacotherapies need to be specially trained and registered. Poisons Control can provide information on whether prescribers are registered.

Prescription requirements

- Prescriptions for non-restricted S8 substances eg. morphine are valid for 2 months, with dispensing allowed for one month's supply at any one time.
- Prescriptions for restricted S8 substances buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone are valid for two months. They must be dispensed within 3 days of the date of issue or the start date (if different).
- Prescriptions for restricted S8s dexamphetamine and methylphenidate are valid for 6 months
- According to the Guidelines the following items must be written on all S8 prescriptions, additional to present requirements:
 - a) the date of birth of the patient;
 - b) the type of preparation i.e. liquid or sublingual tablets, etc; and

- c) doses in words and numbers for buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone and quantities in words and numbers for non-restricted S8 substances and stimulant medication
- A prescription must be written in ink, ball point pen or be produced on a printer. It may not be written in pencil or another easily erasable material.
- Prescribers must sign prescriptions in their handwriting unless they have approval from the CHO to use an electronic or other representation of their signature.
- Prescribers of buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone, in addition to the usual requirements for prescriptions, also need to include the name of the dispensing pharmacy; a detailed dosage regimen and any takeaway privileges. A fact sheet on prescription issues is available.

Miscellaneous

- **Information relating to supply and use of substance**
Section 91A of the Act protects medical practitioners and pharmacists when giving or receiving information on the use of substances in the course of their service provision.
- **Self-prescription and self-administration of Schedule 8 substances**
Legislation prohibits medical practitioners, dentists and veterinarians from prescribing S8 substance to themselves. It is also an offence for health professionals to self-administer S8 substances except in emergency situations, as described in Section 73 of the Act.
- **Storage and Disposal of Schedule 8 substances**
Storage of S8 substances needs to be in accordance with the 'Code of Practice for the Storage and Transport of Schedule 8 Substances'. This publication is available from Poisons Control.

The disposal of out of date and unwanted S8 substances needs to be witnessed and documented as described in the Regulations under the Act.
- **Pharmacists to dispense only Northern Territory (NT) written prescriptions**
Pharmacists are only allowed to dispense S8 substances if the prescriber is registered and practising in the Northern Territory.
- **Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Drugs and Poisons (SUSDP)**
The Northern Territory has adopted the SUSDP which is used Australia wide and provides consistency within the Scheduling system. If variations to packaging and labelling become necessary a notice will be given in the Gazette.

For further details please contact:

Poison Control

Phone: (08) 8922 7341

Fax: (08) 8922 7200