

## POISONS CONTROL INFORMATION SHEET

No. 305

### **SUMMARY OF REQUIREMENTS FOR MEDICAL PRACTITIONER**

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

Medical practitioners 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 in order to provide an effective clinical service that 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**

- medical practitioners may supply non-restricted S8 substances for the treatment of medical and surgical conditions but not for the treatment of addiction
- a medical practitioner may only supply non-restricted S8 substances for up to 15 patients at a time
- this number does not include palliative care patients, hospital inpatients or those in need of emergency treatment
- a medical practitioner may apply to the CHO for an authority to prescribe non-restricted S8 substances for more than this number of patients
- medical practitioners must notify the CHO of the supply of non-restricted S8 substances under certain circumstances eg if supply exceeds 8 weeks, if certain dosage levels of increments are exceeded or if their circumstances may be conducive to possible abuse. These conditions are fully described in the Guidelines

#### **Supply of restricted Schedule 8 substances dexamphetamine and methylphenidate**

- authorisation from the CHO is required for each individual patient
- only paediatricians, psychiatrists, physicians, neurologists and registrars in training in these disciplines may make the decision to initiate supply
- other medical practitioners may continue supply after one of the above specialists or registrars have done so

- under such a co-management situation the patient must be seen by a specialist or registrar at least once a year
- paediatricians may initiate supply without an authorisation, but must obtain an authorisation if supply exceeds 30 days

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

- medical practitioners providing pharmacotherapies for opioid dependence need to complete approved training initially and demonstrate continued clinical involvement and the undertaking of refresher training
- an authority from the CHO to supply buprenorphine, buprenorphine/naloxone and methadone is required for each individual patient
- the framework for supply of these medications cover the writing of prescriptions, details of authorisation requirements, period of supply, dispensing of medications and takeaway privileges. Full details are in the Guidelines

The CHO may grant exemptions from authorisations to prescribe an S8 substance in certain circumstances, declared by notice in the Gazette.

### **Prescription requirements**

Additional requirements for the writing of prescriptions for S8 substances apply to ensure safe dispensing of potentially addictive medications. The Guidelines contain full details.

### **Electronic Prescribing**

A prescriber must sign a prescription by his or her own hand. The CHO may approve an electronic or other representation of the signature.

### **Miscellaneous**

- **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.
- **NT pharmacists to dispense S8 prescriptions only from NT prescribers**  
Pharmacists are only allowed to dispense S8 substances if the prescriber is registered and practising in the Northern Territory.
- **The CHO can declare Schedule 4 substances to be 'restricted'**  
S4 substances that are being used in a harmful manner and cause community concerns may be declared as 'restricted' by the CHO by notice in the Gazette. The CHO may impose conditions for the supply of a 'restricted' S4 substance.

- **Scheduled Substances Treatment Protocols (SSTPs) – Standing orders for medicines**

SSTPs may be used in a variety of health facilities, which are detailed in Section 90 of the Act. The Regulations, in Section 6, provide the particulars and conditions for the protocols, including the requirement that they are approved by the CHO.

- **24 hour clinical advice**

For clinical advice contact the Drug and Alcohol Clinical Advisory Service (DACAS). This telephone service offers professional advice to medical practitioners, pharmacists and other health professionals on a 24 hour 7 day a week basis.

For more information phone 1800 111 092.

For further details please contact:

**Poison Control**

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