

POISONS CONTROL INFORMATION SHEET

MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

No. 300.9

A customer complains that your pharmacy stocks clear methylated spirits, he/she says that it should be coloured purple. Is the customer correct?

Since 17 October 2001, methylated spirits for domestic use **has not been required** to be coloured with a crystal-violet dye.

Please refer to the Methylated Spirits Poisons Control Information Sheet No. 313 located on the Manufacturers, Wholesalers and Retailers page of the Poisons Control website www.nt.gov.au/health/gov.au for further details on the legal requirements when selling methylated spirits.

Can I sell ethanol to a regular customer who will use it for cleaning electronic equipment?

No. Industrial ethanol sales are controlled by the Australian Taxation Office (ATO).

They need to contact ATO for a permit if they really need this substance (for a business). It might be easier for the customer to use an alternative alcohol such as methylated spirits or isopropyl alcohol.

A remote area store manager wants to buy some analgesics, antihistamines and cough and cold medicines to stock at the store. Is this legal?

In remote areas of the Northern Territory pharmacies are not readily accessible. As a result, remote area retailers who are more than 40 km away by road from a pharmacy may be licensed to sell S2 medicines such as paracetamol drops for babies and certain cough and cold remedies. More potent medicines listed in Schedule 3 (Pharmacist Only Medicines) are not permitted to be supplied by any retailers.

To ensure that the remote area store in question is a licensed retailer of S2 medicines, you should ask for the store's retail licence to be faxed through. This licence should clearly state they are licensed to retail S2 medicines within a specified timeframe. If the manager is not aware that a licence is needed, refer them to Poisons Control on (08) 8922 7341.

Can a salbutamol inhaler be sold to a school or person to be in a first aid kit ie. not for the use of a particular patient?

Yes, the *Poisons and Dangerous Drugs Act (PaDDA)* does not prevent you from doing so. It is not a legal requirement that a person possess a medical kit authorisation in order to obtain a salbutamol inhaler to be placed in a first aid kit. It may however be appropriate for you to ask if that person has a current first aid certificate or asthma management certificate from Asthma NT and determine whether they have a spacer.

A regular customer has asked me to dispense two supplies of a stimulant prescription as he/she is going overseas for 2 months. Is this legal?

You are specifically prohibited from dispensing both supplies on the same occasion. You are however allowed to dispense the second supply on the next day.

For long trips overseas the medical practitioner should apply to the Chief Health Officer for a special authorisation for the patient to enable him/her to collect the total supply quantity required in one go. The application process can take a minimum of two weeks as it needs to be assessed by the Schedule 8 and Restricted Schedule 4 Substances Clinical Advisory Committee. When issued, the doctor must write the authorisation number on the prescription so that the pharmacist knows it is legal for him/her to issue the total quantity of S8 medication.

How often should I check the S8 register?

The register should be correct at all times for all items. At a minimum, check when you start at a new pharmacy (for your own protection) and check the balance weekly when the S8 report and paperwork are sent to Poisons Control.

What should I do if a police constable asks for a patient prescription history?

The correct procedure must be followed in the collection of evidence. Ask the constable for identification and ask him/her to bring a warrant (only Sergeants and above are considered Poisons Inspectors in the NT).

What should I do if the Coroner's constable asks for a patient prescription history?

The Coroner's constable has powers under the Coroner's Act. It is still appropriate to ask for identification and a written request. As a general rule, the Coroner's Office will contact Poisons Control and we would consolidate a report for all NT pharmacies.

What should I do if a Health Complaints Commission Investigations Officer asks for certain information?

It would be best for you to contact your insurance company if it is about you or your business. The officer will have written permission for evidence signed by the person who has complained and they should provide this to you.

How can I tell if an optometrist prescription is legal?

Under PaDDA the script should be endorsed with 'for optometrical use only'. It is suggested that you contact the Health Professions Licensing Authority on (08) 8999 4157 to confirm if the optometrist is therapeutically endorsed and what is the drug list which optometrists can prescribe.

Can a nurse practitioner write a prescription?

Under PaDDA this is not yet allowed. Section 29 allows Registered Nurses at designated health centres and other areas to initiate supply for specific lists of drugs.

Who can order stock ie. sign the order form for health care facilities?

Only medical practitioners should sign orders for GP surgeries, Registered Nurses can do so for specific health centres and Aboriginal Health Workers can do so for specific health centres. For further clarification please contact Poisons Control on (08) 8922 7341.

Can I supply Scheduled substances to a fishing boat or an international cruise liner for its medical kit?

PaDDA allows for the master to order items on a commercial vessel. You should ask for a written order on letter head, identification and a copy of the medical kit list.

Can I supply Scheduled substances to a yacht going on the Darwin to Ambon race for its medical kit?

The yacht is not commercial, and as such, the captain would need to have a medical kit authorisation (issued by Poisons Control) for items on the Australian Yachting Federation lists for races. The medical kit is designed to cater for emergency situations only, not for treatment of chronic conditions.

For further details please contact:

Poison Control

Phone: (08) 8922 7341

Fax: (08) 8922 7200