



Guidance for Pharmacists Interstate Prescriptions for Schedule 8 Medicines in Western Australia from 18 October 2010

This information is intended for pharmacists practising in Western Australia. Some other jurisdictions have legislated to prevent prescriptions for Schedule 8 medicines from being valid unless the prescriber is practising in that state or territory.

Previously:

The definitions of a 'medical practitioner' and a 'dentist' in the *Poisons Act 1964* and its subsidiary legislation, the *Poisons Regulations 1965*, were a medical practitioner registered under the *Medical Practitioners Act 2008* and a dentist registered under the *Dental Act 1939*. These definitions meant that prescriptions for Schedule 8 medicines were not valid in Western Australia unless the prescriber was registered in Western Australia.

From 18 October 2010:

Implementation of a national registration scheme for health practitioners, under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (WA) Act 2010*, means that a registered medical practitioner or dentist is now defined as a medical practitioner or dentist who is registered by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). This means that provided a medical practitioner or dentist is registered with AHPRA, he/she is considered to be a 'medical practitioner' or 'dentist' wherever that term appears in the *Poisons Act 1964* and the associated *Poisons Regulations 1965*.

Details of registered health practitioners can be found on the AHPRA website at www.ahpra.gov.au.

Veterinary surgeons are not included in the national scheme and continue to be registered on a state/territory basis.

What this means in Western Australia:

This change means that a prescription for a Schedule 8 (S8) medicine is not invalid *merely* because the prescribing medical practitioner or dentist is not located or practising in Western Australia.

However, for some S8 medicines, prescriptions with an interstate prescriber address *should not be dispensed*. These S8 medicines are – *stimulants (dexamphetamine and methylphenidate), methadone and buprenorphine for use in the C-POP and flunitrazepam*. These S8 medicines are subject to extra regulatory controls, mainly with respect to who is authorised to write a prescription (see below for details).

Prescriptions must still be compliant with all the requirements of the *Poisons Regulations 1965* and pharmacists must continue to make all the required checks to determine the validity of the prescription prior to dispensing.

Required information on a prescription, including handwritten information on computer generated prescriptions: Even though the prescription may have been written in another jurisdiction, it must include all the information required on a S8 prescription in Western Australia (Regulation 51).

Prescribing by dentists: For a prescription for a S8 medicine written by a dentist to be valid in Western Australia, it can only be for S8 items on the PBS Dental Schedule and dentists can only prescribe up to 7 days treatment at a time (Regulation 51H).

Prescription verification: As neither the handwriting nor the signature of an interstate practitioner is likely to be familiar, pharmacists will need to verify the prescription with the purported prescriber before they dispense the S8 medicine for the patient (Regulations 52(3a) and 53A(1)). With time

zone variations across Australia, this may mean that telephone contact cannot be made with the prescriber until the following day. Pharmacists are reminded that they *may* choose to supply up to 2 days therapy of the S8 medicine in the event that they cannot immediately verify the prescriber.

Do not assume that the prescription is valid simply because it is computer-generated, has a PBS Authority Number that is accepted by PBS Online Claiming, doesn't look suspicious or has been dispensed previously (retention of S8 repeats is not required in all jurisdictions).

Pharmacists are also encouraged to make a timely record of any discussion with the prescriber, including the telephone number dialed. Pharmacists are reminded to independently verify any telephone numbers for doctors provided to them by those presenting the prescription (for example, by using the White Pages online).

Retention of repeats: If the prescription has repeats, it must still be retained at the pharmacy in WA (Regulation 52). This may be an issue for a patient who is travelling to or returning to another state or territory. Retention of prescriptions is not a requirement in many other jurisdictions so it would be prudent to warn the patient of this requirement before the prescription is dispensed.

The usual processes for transfer of prescriptions should be used (telephone the Pharmaceutical Services Branch on 9222 6883) even if the pharmacy receiving the transfer is located interstate. Contact must be made with the interstate pharmacy and the pharmacist should verify the contact details for the nominated pharmacy independently.

Once dispensed, the duplicate and repeat authorisation form cannot be returned to the patient. Transfer must only be to someone authorised to dispense the prescription and, therefore, will almost always be to another pharmacy. Transfer of the prescription to a pharmacy in another jurisdiction is preferable to sending further repeat dispensings to the patient by mail or providing them to an agent of the patient. Alternatively, if the patient is intending to remain in Western Australia, they should be encouraged to seek a treating medical practitioner in this state as soon as possible.

S8 Stimulant Medicines: In WA, stimulants can only be prescribed by doctors issued with a Stimulant Prescriber Number (SPN) by the WA Department of Health or doctors nominated as 'co-prescribers' by the SPN holder. As prescriptions written interstate are unlikely to comply with these requirements, they should not be dispensed. If the patient or their parent/guardian claims that the medicine is urgently required whilst in WA, please contact the Pharmaceutical Services Branch for advice.

C-POP Prescriptions: It is very unlikely that a prescription for pharmacotherapy of opioid dependence (Methadone Syrup, Biodone forte[®], Subutex[®] or Suboxone[®]) written interstate would be compliant with the requirements of the Western Australian C-POP Policies Manual. For example, such prescriptions must include the name of the pharmacy at which the prescription is valid and the patient's WA Department of Health authorisation number. Poisons Regulation 51B(2) requires compliance with the Policies Manual by both prescribers and dispensers. Movement of these patients from one jurisdiction to another is not a new phenomenon and until otherwise advised, all interstate transfers for these patients will continue to be arranged through the Community Clinical Programs.

Flunitrazepam: Prescriptions can only be dispensed if they are endorsed by the prescriber with the HDWA Authorisation Number (Regulation 51GB). This is unlikely to be the case where the prescription has been written at an interstate medical practice because this number indicates that the prescriber is authorised by the WA Department of Health to prescribe for the patient.

If further information is required:

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