

PRACTICE NOTICE

Dispensing of Prescription Only Medicines – Faxes

Dispensing involves the complete process which occurs, from receipt of the prescription or request at the pharmacy, to the prescribed item or medicine being collected by the patient or patient's representative. When dispensing, the patient is the primary focus, and the prescribed medicines must be assessed as being appropriate for that individual. Any dispensed medicines must be delivered to him/her in a manner which reflects diligence and care in the receipt, review, assembling, checking, recording and dispatch. The use of faxes to facilitate the process of dispensing is practical, in certain instances. However, the use of a fax to provide the legal entitlement to dispense is not appropriate.

The legislation governing the supply of prescription-controlled medicinal products in place in this jurisdiction¹ applies a comprehensive system of control which addresses the identity, conditions and practical management of such supply, in the interest of the health and safety of the patient. In complying with the specified legal requirements, in tandem with exercising the professional duty, judgement and responsibility of the pharmacist, a practitioner dispensing a prescription acts in the best interest of the patient. When dispensing a prescription, it should be ascertained that the prescription is written in a manner that complies with the legislative requirements in place, in respect of the particular medication indicated on the prescription.

The Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations, 2003-2007 detail under Article 7 the requirements to be met when a prescription is written. It shall be in ink and be signed by the person issuing it, with his usual signature and be dated by him. The prescription, in the case of a medicinal product, which, by virtue of these regulations may not be supplied except in accordance with a prescription, shall, except in the case of a health prescription that is a repeatable prescription upon which a second or subsequent supply of a medicinal product is being made, be an original as issued by the registered medical practitioner or registered dentist.

In respect of those products, the supply of which is governed by the Misuse of Drugs Regulations 1988, as amended, each product dispensed to a patient must be on receipt of a valid prescription, written in accordance with the requirements specified in Article 13. The prescription must be written in ink or otherwise so as to be indelible and be signed by the person issuing it with his usual signature and dated.

The dispensing of any medicinal product on foot of the receipt of a prescription, irrespective of the scheme classification, e.g. High Tech., Health Amendment, must occur from an original valid document which authorises such supply. The supply of a medicinal product, solely on the receipt of a faxed communication, irrespective of from whom the fax originates is not appropriate.

¹ Medicinal Products (Prescription and Control of Supply) Regulations, 2003-2007
Misuse of Drugs Regulations, 1988, as amended.
Misuse of Drugs (Supervision of Prescriptions and Supply of Methadone) Regulations, 1998