

December 10, 2012

ADVISORY NOTICE – Pharmacists Renewing and/or Adapting Prescriptions

A joint letter from the OCP, CPSO, OPA, and OMA

Dear Member:

On October 9, 2012, new expanded scope regulations came into effect for pharmacists in Ontario. Among the changes is the ability of pharmacists, under their own authority and within specified parameters, to renew or adapt prescriptions for continuity of care and optimization of patient outcomes.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO), the Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP), the Ontario Medical Association (OMA), and the Ontario Pharmacists' Association (OPA) have a long-standing history of supporting the principles that facilitate interprofessional care of patients and of educating our members regarding the practical implications of legislative change. This statement will clarify certain aspects of the regulations and address several issues that are emerging in practice situations.

Overriding Principles

The services included in the expanded scope regulation are part of ongoing medical care and a collaborative relationship between the pharmacist, the patient, and the patient's primary health care provider. The following overriding principles also apply:

- Pharmacists are accountable for practicing within their scope of practice and in accordance with their knowledge, skills and judgment;
- Pharmacists adapt or renew prescriptions only for the benefit of the patient, based on clinical rationale (having distinguished patient's best interest from patient or provider 'convenience'); and
- Pharmacists assume full responsibility and liability for their decisions.

Renewals

The purpose of pharmacists' renewals is to enable continuity of medication for patients with chronic conditions while ensuring appropriate monitoring and reassessment by the primary health care provider.

Pharmacists may choose to renew prescriptions based upon the circumstances of the particular patient and will give consideration to the following:

- the medication to be continued is for a previously diagnosed chronic condition, and
- the patient has tolerated the medication without serious side effects.

The quantity of the drug renewed will not exceed the lesser of:

- the quantity that was originally prescribed, including any refills that were authorized by the original prescriber; or
- a six month's supply.

Documentation in the pharmacy record and notification, to the original prescriber within a reasonable time period, is required for all prescription renewals.

Adaptations

Pharmacists may adapt prescriptions based upon the circumstances of the particular patient by adjusting the dose, dosage form, regimen, or route of administration to address the patient's unique needs and circumstances. The pharmacist's authority does not include therapeutic substitution.

All pharmacists' adaptations require patients' consent that must be documented along with the rationale for the adaptation and follow-up plan. Furthermore, if the adaptation is clinically significant, the original prescriber will be notified within a reasonable time period.

Pharmacists' renewing or adapting authority excludes narcotics, controlled drugs, targeted substances and drugs designated as a monitored drug under the *Narcotics Safety and Awareness Act*.

Communication and Collaboration

Good communication between health care professionals, particularly in a changing environment, is critical to ensuring the best care for patients. Physicians and pharmacists both have a role to play in optimizing medication management and educating patients on the importance of managing and maintaining continuity of care. All practitioners are urged to collaborate and communicate for the benefit of their mutual patients.

No Refill / No Adaptation

Some physicians have blanket 'no refill/no adaptation' policies, meaning they will not authorize refills/adaptations for any patient, any drug and in any circumstance. Such policies are inconsistent with patient-centred care and have no clinical basis. If there are situations where refills or adaptations may not be advisable for clinical reasons, we encourage open discussion between our two professions so that all professionals involved in the patient's care are best positioned to exercise their professional judgment where necessary and appropriate.

The health care system is undergoing considerable change. Collaboration and understanding among health care professionals is critical to ensure that the focus remains on the patient. The CPSO, OMA, OCP and OPA will continue to maintain open and regular dialogue with their respective members and with each other to ensure a smooth transition in the evolving professional relationship between Ontario's physicians and pharmacists.

Sincerely,



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