

**To: All Registered Pharmacies**

**Strategic Planning and Performance Group**

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Dear Colleague,

**Prescription Collection Procedures**

It has come to our attention that there have been a number of incidents whereby medicines, including controlled drugs and drugs liable to misuse and abuse, have been collected by individuals who are not the patient and have not had consent from the patient to collect on their behalf. On some occasions this has resulted in patient harm. The purpose of this letter is to highlight these occurrences and to remind pharmacists of their legal and professional responsibilities in this area.

Pharmacists are reminded of their professional responsibility to ensure that they provide a safe, effective, and quality service including minimising risk and potential harm to patients, paying particular attention to medicines with potential for abuse or dependency.

For all medicines the pharmacy must have robust operating procedures in place for the handover of medicines to the patient or patient representative. The procedure must ensure that there is a check completed prior to handout as to the identity of the individual collecting the medication. This may include confirming whether it is the patient or a representative collecting the medicines and whether consent from the patient for another person to collect the medicines has been given. If there are any doubts surrounding the identity of the individual collecting the medication clarification

should be sought from the patient or suitable representative prior to handover of the medication.

There are additional requirements for the collection and supply of controlled drugs. When a Schedule 2 CD is collected from a pharmacy, the pharmacist is legally required to determine whether the person collecting is the patient, a patient's representative, or healthcare professional.

Where the person attempting to collect the medicine is the patient or patient's representative a pharmacist may request evidence of that person's identity. The decision whether to supply or not is at the discretion of the pharmacist based on their professional judgement. This includes the option of refusing to supply the drug if not satisfied as to the identity of that person. Particular care must be exercised when dealing with substitution patients and the associated risk of diversion.

On occasions when a healthcare professional, acting in their professional capacity on behalf of the patient, is attempting to collect medicines on the patient's behalf the pharmacist must obtain that person's name and address, and they must, unless they are acquainted with that person, request evidence of that person's identity and where evidence of identity is not available, the pharmacist has discretion over whether to supply or not based on their professional judgement.

There is a best practice requirement for patients, or other people collecting Schedule 2 and 3 controlled drugs on their behalf, to sign for them as confirmation of their collection. This applies to both health service and private prescriptions. Patients or their representative should be asked to sign the back of the prescription form on collection of the dispensed medicines and the current HS21/PCD1 prescription forms facilitate this best practice.

It is recommended and best practice that there is an audit trail for any interventions, decisions or concerns, the pharmacist may have, in relation to the supply or refusal to supply of any medication. It is recommended that any such decisions should be documented in the PMR, and that pertinent information is recorded.

If any member of the pharmacy team suspect that a person has attempted to or collected a medication fraudulently the Counter Fraud and Probity Services (CFPS) should be contacted at [cfs@hscni.net](mailto:cfs@hscni.net) or 08000963396 or via an online reporting form at <https://cfps.hscni.net/report/>. You can also report the matter to MRG Inspectorate at [mrg\\_inspectors@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:mrg_inspectors@health-ni.gov.uk) or your local SPPG Pharmacy Advisor.

Yours sincerely,



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