

Pharmacy Council Prescription Fraud- follow up alert

Following on from the recent fraudulent dental prescription for metronidazole and tramadol presented at numerous pharmacies in the Auckland and Waikato regions, pharmacists should assess their prescription processing, dispensing and checking processes to ensure they are robust.

Check prescriptions for legitimacy and legality

Dispensing processes must include checks of prescriptions for legitimacy and adherence to all legal prescription requirements. With the use of computer programmes and scanning facilities, fraudulent prescriptions may be more difficult to detect and pharmacists must use the resources available to validate the authenticity and legality of the prescription.

In the most recent case in Auckland, a scanned prescription, often unsigned, and therefore illegal, was presented multiple times.

Clinical check of prescription

The prescription, dated 10 March 2017 and intended for an acute treatment period of 5 days, was often dispensed outside the 3-month funding timeframe and as such, a clinical check should have prompted the pharmacist to ask questions of the patient and/or the prescriber as to its appropriateness for current use. A clinical check, should also have included a review of the patient medication history, which in many instances would have shown previous dispensings at the same pharmacy for the same prescription.

Access to electronic patient records such as TestSafe

Access to electronic patient records and dispensing data platforms such as TestSafe data provides valuable information regarding previous patient presentations to pharmacies in the area and is a vital tool for detecting patients at risk of serious harm from the misuse, overuse or abuse of medicines.

If pharmacies in your region have access to TestSafe or other shared information platforms, please ensure that you are utilising these valuable tools as part of your patient medication history check when dispensing prescriptions.

We are aware that several pharmacies examined the prescription more closely and checked TestSafe when their suspicions were raised, before following the appropriate process and contacting authorities when this prescription was presented.

Review your processes for clinical and legal checks

Please use this Auckland case as an opportunity to review your systems as health professionals and those of your pharmacy with regard to clinical checking and legal checks of prescriptions.