

B1 Opioid prescribing policy for patients

Purpose

To inform patients about the practice's standards regarding the prescription of drugs of dependence.

Example policy

[insert practice name]

Date effective:

Review date:

OPIOID PRESCRIBING POLICY

Many of our patients require strong, potentially addictive medication to help manage their condition(s). Of concern are 'drugs of dependence' (eg opioid medications and benzodiazepines), particularly when these are prescribed on an ongoing basis. Due to increasing reports of abuse of prescription drugs and patient behavioural problems, [insert practice name] has established a policy to ensure adequate treatment of your condition, while reducing the risk of problems with drug prescriptions.

The major points are described below.

For new patients to the practice:

- It may take time to get accurate medical information about your condition. Until such information is available, your GP may choose not to prescribe any medication. It is our policy that GPs do not prescribe drugs of dependence until they have a full clinical picture.
- Your GP may decide not to continue prescribing an opioid medication previously prescribed for you. It may be determined that such a medication is not suitable. It is our policy that GPs do not prescribe drugs of dependence if they feel that previous prescriptions were inappropriate.
- Your GP will evaluate your condition and only prescribe an opioid of the strength necessary for you. This may be different than what another doctor may have given you in the past.

General practice standards:

- If the decision to prescribe is taken after a shared discussion of goals, plans, risks and benefits, you may be required to confirm your consent in writing.
- You may be asked to sign an agreement that will detail our practice's expectations when prescribing drugs of dependence. This contract details your responsibilities as a patient taking a drug of dependence, any prescriptions issues, advice on taking your medications, how we will monitor your care, and the standards of behaviour that are expected. The agreement is not a legally binding contract.
- You may need to acknowledge that your care requirements are complex, and that referral for ongoing care for all or part of your healthcare may be required. It is our practice policy that patient care is matched with the level of complexity.
- Patients are reminded that we have a zero tolerance policy on issues relating to staff abuse. Any threats to staff will result in transfer of your care.