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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,  
P.O. BOX 5013,  
WELLINGTON.

8 February 1973.

## CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER NO. 123

### TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

(Copy to Retail Pharmacists)

Dear Doctor,

### THE NARCOTICS REGULATIONS 1966: AMENDMENT NO. 4

#### *The Treatment of Drug Dependency*

It has been necessary to amend the Narcotics Regulations 1966 because of the great increase in drug abuse in recent years.

It is generally acknowledged that the treatment of these patients with narcotics prescribed by private practitioners is unsatisfactory, as various services necessary for the therapeutic needs of the patient cannot be provided. Without these services there is a considerable risk of creating drug dependence rather than alleviating it. There is ample evidence that narcotics prescribed for this purpose have been reaching the illegal market.

Experience here follows the pattern of overseas countries, where it has been found necessary to tighten the control of the prescribing of narcotics for the treatment of drug dependency.

Concern in this country has been expressed by the Board of Health Committee on Drug Dependency and Drug Abuse, and by the Medical Association of New Zealand. Full consultation with the latter organisation has been held prior to the submission of these new regulations to the government.

From 12 May 1973, when these regulations come into force, it will be illegal for any medical practitioner to prescribe, administer, or supply any narcotic for or to any person he has reason to believe is dependent on narcotics, in the course, or for the purpose of treatment for dependency unless—

- (a) He has been designated by the Minister by notice in the *Gazette*; or
- (b) He is working in a centre which has been designated by the Minister by notice in the *Gazette*, under the direction of and with the written authority of a practitioner designated under (a) above; or

- (c) He is working in a hospital board hospital designated by the Minister by notice in the *Gazette*, with the written authority of the medical superintendent of that hospital; or
- (d) A particular patient is referred back to his own doctor from one of the above sources, when his treatment may be continued for such period and in accordance with such terms and conditions as may be set out in writing. No treatment under these conditions may continue for more than 3 months unless the authority has been renewed or unless the Medical Officer of Health concurs.

No designations under (a) or (b) have been made at present but the following hospitals and hospital board clinics have been gazetted:

- Auckland Hospital.  
The Auckland Hospital Board's Cathedral Clinic, St. Stephen's Avenue, Parnell, Auckland.
- \*Kingseat Hospital, Auckland.
- \*Oakley Hospital, Auckland.
- Tauranga Hospital.
- Waikato Hospital, Hamilton.
- Rotorua Hospital.
- \*Tokanui Hospital, Te Awamutu.
- The Memorial Hospital, Hastings.
- Palmerston North Hospital.
- Taranaki Base Hospital, New Plymouth.
- The Wellington Hospital Board's Clinic, 54 Murphy Street, Wellington.
- \*Porirua Hospital.
- Nelson Hospital.
- Ngawhatu Hospital, Nelson.
- Princess Margaret Hospital, Christchurch.
- \*Sunnyside Hospital, Christchurch.
- Timaru Hospital.
- Dunedin Hospital.
- Wakari Hospital, Dunedin.
- \*Cherry Farm Hospital, Dunedin.
- Grey Hospital, Greymouth.
- Seaview Hospital, Hokitika.
- Kew Hospital, Invercargill.

Patients considered by you to require treatment with narcotics for drug dependency should be referred to one of these hospitals or hospital centres.

\*These are certified institutions under the Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Act 1966.

Provision has been made for the treatment of patients under the Alcoholism and Drug Addiction Act, for the emergency treatment of a patient in any hospital for a period not exceeding 3 days, and for the treatment of any "restricted person" within the meaning of regulation 26 of the Narcotic Regulations 1966.

In the event of any practitioner or centre wishing to be designated by the Minister under these regulations, application should be made to the Medical Officer of Health, who will arrange a meeting with a representative of the local division of the Medical Association of New Zealand and the medical superintendent of the public hospital in the area, to consider the application and forward a report to the Director-General of Health.

*Restrictions on Supply of Narcotics on Prescription*

The supply of any narcotic that may be dispensed on any prescription is now limited to 1 month's supply. (Payment under the Drug Tariff has been limited to 1 month's supply for many years.)

Provision has been made for the prescribing of individual daily doses for the treatment of drug dependency.

*Prescriptions for Children under the age of 12*

Prescriptions for narcotics for children under the age of 12 must show the child's age in years and months in words.

This requirement has been discussed with the Medical Association of New Zealand and it is intended that it will apply to all prescriptions as and when other relevant legislation is amended. Your co-operation in this matter, and extension of the practice to all prescriptions for children would be appreciated.

Yours faithfully,



(A. W. S. Thompson)  
Director, Division of Clinical Services.



(A. H. Paul)  
Deputy Director.