

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

30 August 1974.

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER NO. 140
TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS AND DENTISTS
(Copy to Proprietors of Retail Pharmacies)

Dear Sir/Madam,

DRUG RECALL

From time to time a drug recall becomes necessary. The extent of this depends on the nature of the fault detected and the potential health hazard that may result. Recall may be necessary to the wholesale level, to hospital and retail pharmacy level or even, although rarely, from the patient himself.

A prearranged plan for a recall has been in existence for some years and has recently been updated. The department is always consulted when the plan needs to be put into operation and advises on the extent of the recall as well as any publicity that may be required.

In the event that pharmacists, doctors, and dentists need to be informed of the necessity for a recall, a standard envelope will be used which will have printed in red the following words:

DRUG RECALL—ACTION IMMEDIATELY.

It is essential that such a communication be acted on with urgency.

PHENACETIN

In the tenth amendment to the Poisons Regulations 1964, phenacetin was scheduled as a prescription poison. Evidence for an association between excessive use of phenacetin and analgesic nephropathy, highlighted in a recent New Zealand study,* has dictated this move, which was a recent recommendation of the Poisons Committee.

Misuse of phenacetin has been largely a result of self-medication. The range of products containing phenacetin is wide. Those available at present, although some are being withdrawn from the market or reformulated, include the following in tablet form:

Aspirin Compound.
Aspirin, Ipecacuanha, and Opium Powder and Phenacetin.
Codco.
Codeine Compound.
Codeine Compound, enteric coated.
Codral.
Codral Forte.
Cystex.
Ephezone.
Myzone.
Phenacetin.
Phenacetin and Caffeine.
Piropfen.
Saridone.
S-Cod.

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH METRIC TABLES: H. 553

Enclosed please find one copy of H. 553—Metric Tables. (For medical practitioners only.)

This card is intended primarily for use by those who are still working with equipment marked in Imperial terms. The number of such appliances is steadily decreasing, so the demand for the card is expected to drop steadily.

*Bailey, R. R., Neale, J. J., Little, P. J. (1974). Analgesic Nephropathy. *N.Z. Med. J.*, 79: 1053-1057.

The Government Printer does *not* hold stocks of this card. Only limited supplies have been printed, and the Department of Health holds a small reserve.

Yours faithfully,

A. W. S. Thompson.

(A. W. S. Thompson),
Director,

A. H. Paul

(A. H. Paul),
Deputy Director,

Division of Clinical Services.

We regret that the drug lists in Clinical Services Letter No. 138, dated 19 July, were faulty (pages transposed). It has been replaced by an amended copy of the same number, dated 1 August. The copy dated 19 July should be destroyed.