

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

30 September 1974.

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER NO. 142
TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS AND DENTISTS
(Copy to Proprietors of Retail Pharmacies)

Dear Sir/Madam,

BRITISH NATIONAL FORMULARY

The British National Formulary, which is issued to medical practitioners, dentists, and pharmacists in New Zealand, provides a formulary of mixtures, ointments, etc., which in general is appropriate for use in this country. It also provides useful background notes on various treatments, adverse reactions, drug interactions, and the emergency treatment of poisoning.

It should be realised, however, that some of the instructions in the British National Formulary do not apply in New Zealand, and that some proprietary preparations included in the Formulary are not covered by the Drug Tariff, or are not marketed in New Zealand.

The information on pages 11 and 12 about the labelling of containers differs in some respects from New Zealand practice.

Pages 14 and 16 give instructions about the dilution of dose volumes. To avoid confusion, the prescribed dose volume should not be altered unless the pharmacist has first consulted the prescriber.

In the Formulary Section there are many instances where directions are given as to the quantity and strength to be dispensed if the prescriber has not supplied these details.

The instructions concerning quantity do not always comply with the period of supply restrictions in the Drug Tariff and are therefore not applicable in this country.

If the prescriber has not stated the strength of a preparation to be dispensed, and more than one strength is available, the pharmacist should contact the prescriber and ascertain the strength required before dispensing the prescription. Medical practitioners and dentists will appreciate the added burden this omission would place on a pharmacist, particularly if the prescriber cannot be reached by telephone when the prescription is presented. It is important, therefore, that the strength required is stated in the prescription in the first instance. Only if the prescriber cannot be contacted should a pharmacist accept the British National Formulary recommendation as a guide.

RADIOGRAPHIC PREPARATORY SUBSTANCES

In accordance with a recommendation of the Public Expenditure Committee on the Cost of Drugs, from 1 December 1974 the Drug Tariff will be amended so that these preparations are obtained by practitioners from wholesale outlets. Practitioners will then be reimbursed by the Department of Health on the submission of wholesalers' invoices. Further advice on the procedure to be followed will be issued in a Clinical Services Letter prior to 1 December.

DRUG TARIFF DELETION

It has been recommended that theophylline be deleted from the Drug Tariff from *1 December 1974*. This is partly for therapeutic reasons, and partly because of the price of the only available brand. This deletion would not apply to combination preparations containing theophylline already listed specifically in the Drug Tariff.

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 12

Legislation dealing with narcotics and prescription poisons requires that medical practitioners and dentists state the age on prescriptions for children under 12 years of age.

Failure to observe this requirement is causing embarrassment and concern to pharmacists.

A survey undertaken in 24 pharmacies showed that on one day 88 percent of prescriptions known to be for children did *not* indicate the age. In 10 pharmacies none of the prescriptions for children gave any indication of age.

If the age of a child does not appear on a prescription, the pharmacist may have no warning, in case of error, that an excessive dose has been prescribed. On occasion this has had fatal consequences. We should therefore appreciate your co-operation in complying with this requirement.

Yours faithfully,



(A. W. S. Thompson)
Director,



(A. H. Paul)
Deputy Director,

Division of Clinical Services.

"APPROVED CONDITION"

Attention is directed to the fact that the endorsement of a prescription with the words "Approved Condition" has only one meaning, viz, that the drug in question has been ordered for therapeutic purposes, but neither for contraceptive purposes nor as a pregnancy test.

A doctor, therefore, who endorsed in this manner a prescription intended for contraceptive purposes would be issuing a false certificate.

REGISTER OF SPECIALISTS

We regret that the following names of doctors, previously recognised as specialists by the Medical Council of New Zealand, were inadvertently omitted from the consolidated List of Recognised Specialists—Clinical Services Letter No. 136:

Greig, Murray Hickson, Otolaryngology.
Jones, Donald John, Orthopaedic Surgery.

BY AUTHORITY:

A. R. SHEARER, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND—1974

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