

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

20 February 1975.

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER NO. 148
TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS AND DENTISTS
(Copy to Proprietors of Retail Pharmacies)

Dear Sir/Madam,

GUARD AGAINST NARCOTIC SEEKERS*

Don't leave blank prescription pads lying around.

- Drug dependants may use them for forgeries.
- Misaid prescriptions should be reported immediately to your local medical officer of health and to the police.

Don't leave signed blank prescriptions at the surgery for your nurse to complete.

Don't write prescriptions in pencil.

- The law requires prescriptions for narcotics and prescription poisons to be written indelibly.
- Prescriptions written in pencil are easy to alter.

Do write prescriptions legibly.

- The law requires you to do this.
- Illegibly written prescriptions may be easy to tamper with.

Don't carry large stocks of narcotics or prescription poisons in your bag.

- Dependants are always on the lookout for doctors' bags in surgeries and cars.
- Be sure your car is locked whenever unoccupied.
- Never leave your bag where it can be seen, whether in your surgery or car. Storage in a locked boot is the best way when travelling.

Don't store surgery supplies where patients have access to them.

Avoid storage, particularly of syringes and medicines, near sinks or lavatory. Patients may use these facilities.

*Adapted with assistance from the New Zealand Drug Intelligence Bureau from an article in the Monthly Bulletin of the N.S.W. Branch, Australian Medical Association.

Do ensure that used disposable syringes and needles are rendered useless before being discarded.

Don't fall for a good story from a stranger claiming an ailment that usually requires a drug of dependence.

Drug dependants may produce blood stained sputum and urine, or simulate a bad cough or similar symptoms. Always make your own diagnosis.

Don't give a narcotic prescription to anyone without seeing the patient personally. Drug dependants have posed as nurses to encourage doctors to prescribe narcotics.

Don't prescribe large quantities unless completely unavoidable.

Diversion of narcotics and some prescription poisons to drug dependants is a profitable business.

Don't prescribe drugs of dependence solely because a patient claims that another doctor has been doing so. Consult the physician mentioned or the hospital records whenever possible.

Don't prescribe narcotics for the treatment of patients claiming to be dependent on narcotics.

- It is against the law.

- Refer all such patients to the nearest hospital board clinic established for the treatment of dependency.

Don't resent a call from a pharmacist seeking information about a prescription. The pharmacist is legally responsible if an irregular prescription is filled.

Do keep a check on all narcotics supplied to patients.

Don't hesitate to call your local medical officer of health or the police to get or give information.

This will be regarded as strictly confidential.

Yours faithfully,

A. W. S. Thompson

(A. W. S. Thompson)
Director,

D. A. Andrews

(D. A. Andrews)
Deputy Director,

Division of Clinical Services

HIGHER G.M.S. BENEFITS FOR "CHRONICALLY ILL" PATIENTS

The method of applying for this benefit was set out in Clinical Services Letter No. 145, dated 19 November. In appendix B a form of application was suggested.

It has been necessary to return certain applications for further information. This is irritating both to doctors and to divisional staff. Reasons have included the following:

- (a) The patient has already been entitled to the higher benefit under code letters J, Y, or P.
- (b) The designation of female patients—Miss, Mrs, or Ms—has not been shown. As the department must write to the patient, this creates a difficulty.
- (c) Difficulty in identifying the signature of a doctor in a partnership practice. In writing to the patient, we quote the doctor's name. It is awkward not to be able to do so.

Attention to these points would be appreciated.

Difficulties of identification may arise where patients change their doctors or move to another health district. With some common surnames, initials alone may not be sufficient to avoid confusion. Most doctors supply forenames in full, and it would help considerably if all doctors were to do so.

PRACTOLOL (ERALDIN)

From 1 April 1975 practolol will be deleted from the Drug Tariff. This decision was reached following consideration of reports of adverse reactions referred to in Clinical Services Letter No. 146 of 18 December 1974 and Clinical Services Letter No. 147 of 30 January 1975.

EPIDURAL ANAESTHESIA—MATERNITY BENEFITS

On the recommendation of the Medical Services Advisory Committee, it has been decided that the previous system for recognising the proficiency of general practitioners in epidural anaesthetics should be reinstated.

The epidural "list" is to be reopened for a period of 3 years, after which time the situation will be reviewed. As before, general practitioners seeking recognition should make application (supported by a certificate concerning practical experience) to the Director, Division of Clinical Services, who will forward these applications to the New Zealand Society of Anaesthetists for a recommendation.

VISITING MEDICAL PRACTITIONER: WELLINGTON

Applications are invited for the position of Visiting Medical Practitioner, Division of Clinical Services, stationed in Wellington.

Salary will be \$13,871 per annum, maximum \$14,855, plus travelling expenses and allowances.

The appointee would be required to visit medical practitioners to discuss prescribing problems, advances in therapy and drug costs, and to lecture medical students in the same fields, and must be a registered medical practitioner with extensive experience in general practice. He will be required to interest himself in the problems of general practitioners under varying conditions of practice and to keep his knowledge of therapeutics thoroughly up to date. He will be responsible for visiting doctors in the Health Districts of Rotorua, Gisborne, Napier, New Plymouth, Wanganui, Palmerston North, Wellington, and Hutt.

Applications on form P.S.C. 17A, obtainable from any post office or from this office, should be forwarded to the Staff Clerk, Department of Health, P.O. Box 5013, Wellington.

BY AUTHORITY:

A. R. SHEARER, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND—1975

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