



Department of Health,
P.O. Box 5013,
Wellington.

10 July 1978

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER No. 182

To Medical and Dental Practitioners

(Copy to Proprietors of Retail Pharmacies)

Drug Tariff 1974, Amendment No. 14: Effective 1 August 1978

This clinical services letter will be the only record most will have of the present changes to the Tariff. As it is not a cumulative list, it is suggested that this letter, along with earlier clinical services letters, should be retained for reference purposes.

1. To be available from a retail pharmacy:

Additions—

Betamethasone dipropionate cream and ointment (Diprosone).
Doxycycline tablets 100 mg (Vibramycin).
Miconazole nitrate vaginal cream (Gyno-Daktarin 7).
Sodium nitroprusside, buffered, diagnostic strips (Ketostix).
Sodium tetradecyl sulphate injection (S.T.D.).
Tretinoin gel (Retin-A gel).

2. To be available from a retail pharmacy on the prescription or recommendation of an appropriate specialist:

Addition—

Colestipol hydrochloride (Colestid).

3. To be available from a retail pharmacy on the prescription of a plastic surgeon as well as on the prescription of a dermatologist or an oncologist:

Changed Availability—

Fluorouracil topical solution and topical cream (Efudix, Fluoroplex).

4. To be available from a retail pharmacy but only on a practitioner's supply order:

Additions—

Naloxone hydrochloride injection (Narcan).
Trimetaphan camsylate (Arfonad).

5. To be available on a wholesale supply order (described later):
Addition—

Soda lime.

6. Allpyral allergen extracts will be a charge under the Drug Tariff.
It is understood that order forms will be available from the distributors, and payment will be claimed direct from the Department by the firm.

7. To be available from a hospital pharmacy:

Addition—

Sodium cromoglycate eye drops (Opticrom).

8. To be available from a hospital pharmacy on the prescription or recommendation of an appropriate specialist:

Addition—

Sodium cromoglycate capsules (Nalcrom).

9. Deleted from the Drug Tariff:

Gelsemium and hyoscyamus mixture compound, B.P.C.

Potassium bromide.

Potassium bromide and belladonna mixture for infants, B.N.F.

Sodium bromide.

These have been deleted as they are no longer considered to be desirable therapy.

Cost/Efficacy Review of Therapeutic Groups—Part-charges

The medicines listed below will carry a part-charge to the patient from 1 August 1978. These part-charges arise because the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee consider that these medicines are too expensive in comparison with other similar medicines used for the same indications and that there are no advantages over these alternatives which warrant a higher price.

Cremorin.

Hydergine.

Alphacillin capsules 350 mg.

Pondocillin capsules 175 mg and 350 mg.

Novotriad tablets.

The Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee did not review antifungal preparations at its last meeting and will probably do so at the August meeting. Therefore, there is still opportunity for comments to be referred to the committee before its meeting.

In Clinical Services Letter No. 178, reference was made to the possibility of a part-charge on Surmontil tablets 25 mg. The price for these tablets has been reduced so that they will remain a full charge under the Drug Tariff.

Contraceptives

From 1 August 1978 most contraceptives will be available under the Drug Tariff for supply to certain patients on the prescription or order of a medical practitioner. Such prescriptions or orders will require to be endorsed "approved condition" by the practitioner as an indication of entitlement for free supply on medical grounds, or because, in the opinion of the practitioner, it would be inappropriate for the patient to pay. Such prescriptions will no longer require reference to the Department of Health.

Prescriptions for oestrogen/progestogen tablets prescribed for gynaecological or other therapeutic purposes will still require the endorsement "approved condition".

Period of Supply

Up to 6 months' supply of oral contraceptives may be prescribed on any one prescription but, under the Tariff, no more than 3 months' supply will be dispensed at a time. If, in the opinion of the medical practitioner, it is desirable that less than a 3 months' supply should be given at any one time, the prescription should be endorsed accordingly.

When oestrogen/progestogen tablets are prescribed for therapeutic purposes, a maximum of 3 months' supply may be prescribed at one time.

Up to 3 months' supply of condoms, spermicidal agents, and Depo-Provera may be prescribed on a prescription. All prescriptions for a period of supply greater than 5 days will require to be endorsed with the words "extended supply" and the period for which the contraceptives are to be supplied.

It is requested that prescriptions for contraceptives should be written on a separate prescription form wherever possible. This will allow for earlier reimbursement of pharmacists.

Oral Contraceptives

Those oestrogen/progestogen combination tablets and progestogen tablets at present listed in the Tariff will be available for eligible patients on a prescription, or on a practitioners supply order if a medical practitioner requires supplies for emergency purposes for these patients. In addition, these tablets remain available for gynaecological or other therapeutic purposes.

The Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee has carried out a cost/efficacy review of this group of medicines. As a result, some of the more expensive will carry a part-charge to the patient from 1 August, as follows:

Anovlar 21
Conovid E
Duoluton
Eugynon

Microgynon 50 ED
Neogynon
Neogynon ED
Norlestrin-28

Eugynon ED
Gynovlar 21
Microgynon 30 ED

Orlest-28
Ovral

These products will also carry a part-charge when used for gynaecological or other therapeutic purposes. If a product which carries a part-charge is essential for the treatment of a particular patient for whom a charge would be unreasonable, it will be possible to write to the Director of Clinical Services requesting free supply as a supplementary pharmaceutical benefit.

Practitioners should remember that the endorsement "approved condition" will be required on both prescriptions and practitioners supply orders for free contraceptive supply.

Contraceptive Injection

Currently, Depo-Provera is the only product of this type available on the market. For eligible patients, it will be available on a prescription or on a practitioners supply order form endorsed "approved condition". It should be remembered that the quantity ordered on a practitioners supply order should not exceed that which the practitioner may reasonably expect to require for personal administration to patients under his care for a period of up to 1 month.

Intrauterine Devices

Supplies for eligible patients may be obtained by medical practitioners from a wholesaler or importer, on a wholesale supply order endorsed "approved condition". The quantity ordered should be no greater than the practitioner would normally expect to use in 1 month. These are expensive products and economy of ordering is requested.

The following brands will be available under the Drug Tariff:

Copper T 200.
Gravigard (Copper 7).
Lippes Loop.
Multiload.

Condoms

These will be available for free supply to eligible patients only on a prescription endorsed "approved condition". The normal period of supply situation will pertain and practitioners are requested to observe economy in prescribing.

Only those brands which comply with the standard gazetted in accordance with section 6 (1) of the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act 1977 will be available under the Drug Tariff. They are:

Black Shadow.
Nu-form.
Fetherlite.
Gossamer.

Currently, Gossamer is the cheapest and should be prescribed unless there is an indication for use of a more expensive brand.

Diaphragms

Diaphragms will be available to eligible patients only on a prescription endorsed "approved condition". In view of the number of sizes available and the cost, it is considered unlikely that individual practitioners will need stocks of all sizes on hand, particularly as diaphragms are rarely required for emergency use. A prescription would normally be for the supply of one diaphragm only.

The following brands will be available under the Drug Tariff:

Durex.
Koromex.
Lambert.
Ortho.

A standard will be gazetted in the near future in terms of section 6 (1) of the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Act 1977, and this may alter the future availability of certain brands.

Spermicidal Agents

The following brands have been approved by the Director-General for supply under the Drug Tariff to eligible patients and will be available only on a prescription endorsed "approved condition".

Delfen foam.
Gynomin pessaries.
Koromex cream, jelly, and foam.
Ortho-Creme.
Ortho-Gynol jelly.
Preceptin gel.
Rendell's pessaries.

Payment will be made for applicators when they are prescribed.

It is recommended that spermicidal agents should only be used in conjunction with barrier or other contraceptive methods.

Pregnancy Tests

As from 1 August an amendment to the Schedule of the Social Security (Laboratory Diagnostic Services) Regulations 1946 will allow for a fee to be paid for the performance of pregnancy testing by a recognised pathologist on the written request of a medical practitioner.

Pregnancy testing kits will also be available to medical practitioners free of charge on a wholesale supply order. The supply ordered should not exceed the number of tests which the practitioner might reasonably expect to carry out in 1 month, except that a complete kit may be ordered at one time.

Two brands of tests will be available initially. They are considered to provide accurate results, their cost is reasonable, and they have a suitable pack size.

(a) *Planosec slide test*

This is a latex agglutination inhibition slide test with 10 tests in each kit. It can be stored at room temperature and has a shelf life of 2 years.

(b) *Gravindex slide test*

This is an agglutination inhibition slide test with 25 tests in each kit. It must be stored in a refrigerator (at 2–8°C) and has a shelf life of 1 year.

Wholesale Supply Orders

From 1 August practitioners or the licensee or manager of a licensed hospital or a place recognised and approved as a hospital for the purposes of Part II of the Social Security Act 1964, may obtain their supplies of certain preparations from a wholesaler, importer, or manufacturer. The products concerned are:

- (a) Intravenous fluids, except those required for patients on home dialysis units (which will remain available on prescription).
- (b) Irrigating solutions (sterile, proprietary).
- (c) Contrast media.
- (d) Alfathesin, halothane, methoxyflurane, and soda lime.
- (e) Pregnancy tests (as approved by the Director-General).
- (f) Intrauterine contraceptive devices (as approved by the Director-General and if the order is endorsed "approved condition").

All orders shall be made on a wholesale supply order form. These forms, which may be obtained from district health offices, are in triplicate. All three forms should be forwarded by the practitioner or licensee or manager to the firm from whom the order is to be supplied. One copy will be returned as a packing slip, one will be retained by the supplier, and one will be referred by the supplier to the medical officer of health, Auckland or Wanganui or Christchurch, in direct claim for payment.

The quantity ordered on a wholesale supply order should not exceed that quantity which may be expected to meet reasonable needs for a period of 1 month. Any items ordered on a wholesale supply order which are not a claim under the Drug Tariff must be clearly marked accordingly.

Any errors in products supplied should be discussed directly with the supplier. Any suggestion of irregularities should be referred to the medical officer of health.

Treasury has advised that this department must instigate systematic sampling procedures to ensure that the system is not abused in any way. From time to time, therefore, letters will be sent to practitioners and licensees of hospitals seeking confirmation that supplies have, in fact, been received. It is important that you check the supplies received against the packing slip copy and that you retain these copies so that you are able to answer any query made by this department. The department is required to make a full report to Treasury in a year's time.

Specialist Restriction

From 1 August 1978 when continuing therapy recommended by a specialist, practitioners will be required to annotate the prescription with the year of authorisation as well as the name of the specialist. For example, "Recommended by Dr A. L. Smith, 78". In addition, the Drug Tariff now requires that annotations should be written in the practitioner's own handwriting or signed or initialled by the prescriber.

Recommendations will remain valid until the end of the second calendar year following the initial recommendation, i.e., all recommendations dated 1978 will remain valid until 31 December 1980. All current recommendations should be annotated as having been recommended in 1978. It is, however, suggested that many old recommendations should be reviewed now.

This restriction is introduced with the concurrence of the New Zealand Medical Association and the Pharmacology and Therapeutics Advisory Committee. The need for the restriction became apparent during the recent checking of "recommended by specialist" endorsements. It was obvious that a considerable proportion of recommendations were many years old and that a number of the recommending specialists had long left practice, since died or left the country. It also became apparent that many specialists no longer regarded recommendations made a number of years ago as being currently the most suitable therapy. It is not reasonable to expect that, when making a recommendation, a specialist must regard that recommendation as being for all time.

It is requested that both general practitioners and specialists should keep a record of all therapy recommended in this manner. This should include the date of recommendation and whether given in writing or by telephone.

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INTENSIFIED A.D.R. REPORTING SCHEME

Medicines Involved

Acebutolol hydrochloride (Sectral).
Atenolol (Tenormin).
Cefoxitin (Mefoxin).
Cimetidine (Tagamet).
Labetalol hydrochloride (Trandate).
Metoprolol tartrate (Betaloc, Lopresor).
Sotalol hydrochloride (Sotacor).
Perhexiline maleate (Pexid).
Sodium valproate (Epilim).

SPECIAL NOTICE

Supply of Contraceptives to Persons Under 16 Years of Age

When a medical practitioner has reason to believe that a person is under 16 years of age and is of the opinion that the patient qualifies for a free supply of contraceptives on medical grounds or because it would be inappropriate for the patient to pay, the prescription may be endorsed "approved condition" only if the prescription or medicines are to be supplied to the parent or guardian of the minor unless the parent or guardian requests in writing that the prescription is to be supplied to the minor.

If a person under 16 years of age who otherwise would qualify for free contraceptives does not permit the parent or guardian to be informed that contraceptives are being prescribed, then the prescription must not be endorsed "approved condition" and the patient will be responsible for meeting the whole cost of the prescription.

This requirement is included in the Drug Tariff at the direction of the Minister of Health, effective 1 August 1978. Implementation of this requirement has resulted in a delay in the publication of this clinical services letter; the department regrets that this was unavoidable.