

Despatched 14/11/58
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
P.O. Box 5013,
WELLINGTON.

12 November 1958

IMPORTANT

Clinical Services Letter No. 6

TO ALL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS:

Dear Sir/Madam,

ANTIBIOTICS: "CERTIFIED FOURTH SCHEDULE CONDITION"

Since 1 April, "as an experimental measure", prescriptions for the Fourth Schedule antibiotics have been accepted for payment without the endorsement quoted above.

This has been followed by such a marked increase in the use of these antibiotics that it has been decided, with regret, to withdraw this relaxation of the requirements of the Drug Tariff.

From 1 December, therefore, prescriptions for the broad-spectrum antibiotics listed in clause 4 of the Fourth Schedule of the Drug Tariff will not be accepted for payment unless they are endorsed with the words "Certified Fourth Schedule condition". *These words must be written out in full in the handwriting of the prescriber.*

This endorsement is a certificate by the prescriber that the patient is suffering from one of the conditions listed in the Fourth Schedule, which should be studied carefully. You are recommended to ensure that a note is kept in your clinical records of the condition for which the drug has been prescribed.

The reasons for this reversal of policy are set out on the reverse.

Yours faithfully,

A. W. S. Simpson.

Director, Division of Clinical Services.

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REASONS FOR REIMPOSING RESTRICTIONS ON ANTIBIOTICS

On 1 April the requirements regarding the endorsement of prescriptions for Fourth Schedule antibiotics were relaxed "as an experimental measure."

In the following six months:

- (a) Total pharmaceutical costs rose by 14·3 per cent as compared with last year. The increase amounted to £321,818.
- (b) The average cost of all prescriptions rose from 7s. 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. last year, to 7s. 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. for April to September 1958.
- (c) The prescribing of broad-spectrum antibiotics has increased sharply. The following table shows prescriptions per 1,000 population in each area, calculated as for a full year:

B.S. Antibiotic Prescriptions per 1,000 Population

	Pricing Office Areas				
	Auckland	Wellington	Christchurch	Dunedin	DOMINION
Average, past three years	133	72	54	57	90
Current year	146	104	61	77	109
Increase (per cent)	9·8	44·4	13·0	35·1	21·1

- (d) The graph is for actual numbers of prescriptions issued. There is a time-lag before prescriptions come to hand, so the effects of relaxing the requirements are most obvious in the second quarter. The sharp upward swing is clearly shown.

It would appear that the action taken in relaxing the requirements for endorsement of these prescriptions was premature.

