

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

20 December 1967.

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER NO. 76

TO MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS

(Copy to chemists. Please note item on page 2.)

Dear Doctor,

PRESCRIBING BY OFFICIAL NAME

The following quotation from *News and Views*, Special Edition, October, calls for comment:

"It has been suggested that generic prescribing as opposed to brand name prescribing would save money, particularly overseas funds. This is politically tempting but whereas known brands of reputable manufacture have already undergone rigorous quality control and clinical trial, generic drug imports, although cheaper, would require the utmost scrutiny and quality investigation."

We have frequently urged doctors to prescribe by official (generic) name, but not for the reasons suggested above.

A glance through the Alphabetical List of Proprietary Preparations will show that many drugs are sold under several trade-names*. All of those listed in this publication are "known brands of reputable manufacture". Some are much less frequently prescribed than others, but if a doctor specifies a particular brand, this must be supplied. Chemists are therefore forced to stock a multiplicity of brands—all of them reliable—so long as doctors make a habit of prescribing in this manner.

Sooner or later most of these brands become "dead stock". Patterns of prescribing change, and doctors are liable to switch their patronage from one brand to another, often after a visit from a manufacturer's representative.

Some time ago a prominent city chemist circulated a list of his dead stock to colleagues throughout the country. He was carrying hundreds of pounds worth of reputable brands, which were no longer ordered in his area, although many were still in demand elsewhere. Almost any chemist has had similar experiences. Waste of this kind raises overheads, and is bad for the taxpayer in the long run.

The Department fixes the price paid to chemists for each drug on the cheapest reliable brand available. Public funds would not benefit, therefore, if the chemist supplied something which cost less. Nor, in most cases, would it pay the chemist to stock cheaper drugs, because nine out of 10 prescriptions specify the brand required, and substitution is a serious offence. (Any case coming to notice should be reported to the Registrar of the Pharmacy Board, 59 Cambridge Terrace, Wellington C. 3.)

*"Pharmacological and Chemical Synonyms", E. E. J. Marler, 1967, lists 84 trade-names for isoniazid, and 70 for procaine-penicillin.

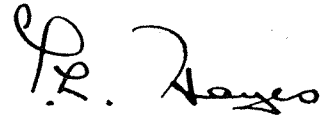
DOCTORS' HANDWRITING

The letter reproduced on the reverse speaks for itself. We did have another letter on this subject, addressed (with justice) to Dr Nimpsin.

Yours faithfully,



(A. W. S. THOMPSON)
Director,



(T. L. HAYES)
Assistant Director,

Division of Clinical Services.

CHEVIOT: DOCTOR URGENTLY REQUIRED

The departure of the sole Cheviot doctor early in 1968 will leave a vacancy with excellent prospects. Rental accommodation available. Inquiries, Dr B. F. Heyward, or County Clerk, Box 22, Cheviot.

Cheviot is 75 miles north of Christchurch, and 46 miles from Kaikoura, on main highway.

Your Clinical Services Letter 74
on illegible prescriptions will,
I'm afraid, fall on ears much
deafened by continued pounding.
Most doctors, like Polonius, take
an inverted pride in the illegibility
that bespeaks years of experience
& insufficient time for the
cultural niceties; moreover, all
of us have heard & read this
complaint to the point where it
ceases to make any sensory im-
pression at all.

My criticism is that you have quite
wasted paper, expensive blocks &

the printer's time with a purely
destructive comment. This gives
neither acceptance, incentive nor
the means to improvement. A
mere mention, for instance, of
George Thomson's "Better Handwriting"
[a slim but sufficient Puffin Book]
or the fuller teach-yourself manual
"From Scribble to Script" by Peter
Ridland [George Allen & Unwin Ltd],
might have produced at least a
positive response.

I think this is fair criticism, especially
as my prescriptions do not appear
among those quoted. I do realise
that I'm grinding my own axe, though.

With regards
Yours sincerely