



**Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society
of Great Britain**

Law and Ethics Bulletin

Validity period for an owing slip

Pharmacists are reminded that, when it is not possible to dispense a prescription in its entirety, the patient, or the patient's carer or representative, should be provided with a legible note detailing the name and quantity of the medicine outstanding, and a record should be kept in the pharmacy. Whenever possible, the patient, carer or representative should be informed when the balance will be available for collection.

When a patient returns to collect the outstanding balance of the prescription, the pharmacists must use his or her professional judgement to decide whether the supply is still necessary and appropriate. Pharmacists should consider the time elapsed since the initial supply was made and whether any changes have been made to the patient's medicines that may warrant a referral to their GP. At the outset, pharmacists should advise the patient, carer or representative that, if they do not collect the outstanding balance within a specified time, it may not be possible to make the supply.

The period of validity of the owing slip will depend on whether the prescription is for a Controlled Drug or not.

Prescriptions for Schedule 2, 3 and 4 Controlled Drugs

The Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001, as amended, restrict the validity of a Schedule 2, 3 or 4 Controlled Drug prescription to 28 days from the appropriate date on the prescription. The appropriate date will either be the date on which the prescription was signed by the person issuing it or the date indicated by him or her as being the start date. If a patient or patient's representative returns to collect an owing for a Schedule 2, 3 or 4 CD more than 28 days after the appropriate date, the outstanding balance cannot be supplied. To prevent patient care being compromised, it would be advisable for pharmacists to inform patients, or their carers or representatives that they must return to collect their owing before the 28-day validity expires.

Other prescriptions

A prescription for a Schedule 5 Controlled Drug, a prescription-only medicine, a pharmacy medicine or a general sale list medicine is valid for six months from the appropriate date, unless it is a repeatable prescription. In the case of a repeatable prescription, the prescription cannot be dispensed for the first time after the six month period, or other than in accordance with the direction contained in the repeatable prescription. The appropriate date will either be the date the prescription was signed by the person issuing it or the date indicated by him or her as being the date before

which it shall not be dispensed. If the patient returns to the pharmacy to collect an owing more than six months after the appropriate date the outstanding balance cannot be supplied, unless it is a repeatable item that was initially dispensed within six months.

12th January 2007

Further to the above LEB, please find below an LEB clarifying the validity period of an owing for a Pharmacy and General Sale List medicine.

Clarification on 'Validity Period of an Owing'

The Law and Ethics bulletin published in the Pharmaceutical Journal on Jan 20 stated that a prescription for a Schedule 5 Controlled Drug, a prescription-only medicine, a pharmacy medicine or a general sale list medicine is valid for six months from the appropriate date, unless it is a repeatable prescription.

By way of clarification, pharmacists are advised that the six month validity period of an owing for a prescription for a pharmacy (P) or general sale list medicine (GSL) is not a legislative requirement, but is instead a professional one. However, where a P or GSL medicine is being prescribed off-licence, then legislation would prevent an owing from being supplied more than six months after the appropriate date. Legislation also prevents owings for Schedule 5 controlled drugs or prescription-only medicines being supplied more than six months from the appropriate date, unless it is a repeatable prescription.

9th February 2007