



Communiqué

A meeting of the Pharmacy Board of Australia was held on 28 January 2011 at the national office of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) in Melbourne.

Registration

The Board has been working closely with AHPRA on issues related to processing applications for initial registration, renewal of registration, confirmation of receipt of applications and issuing of registration certificates. Different issues relate to each of these categories of practitioners but some common themes apply:

- Initial applications: the most common reason for processing delays is when the practitioner submits an incomplete application. In these cases, AHPRA staff are working with individual applicants to help them meet the requirements of the National Law. AHPRA and the Board are also working with education providers and the profession more widely to communicate the practical impacts and changes to registration involved with the introduction of the National Scheme.
- Renewal of registration: Practitioners must apply to renew their registration each year. However, the National Law that now underpins registration in all states and territories now means that practitioners who do not renew their registration on time must reapply for registration. AHPRA and the Board have no flexibility in this. There is a fast track application process for pharmacists who did not renew their registration on time to reapply. The fast track application form is published online at www.ahpra.gov.au. The Board urges pharmacists around Australia to be aware that their registration renewal date is being progressively realigned to the Australia wide renewal date of 30 November for this profession. Your period of registration will vary so by 2011 all practitioners will be due to renew their registration on 30 November. Pro-rata registration fees apply.
- Confirmation of receipt of applications: Under the National Law, practitioners whose renewal application has been received are considered registered and are entitled to practice. Pharmacists can check if their application has been received at (www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Renewal-Received-Confirmation.aspx).
- Registration certificates: AHPRA has been progressively mailing out to practitioners, registration certificates and receipts which include a detachable wallet-size section detailing the individual's registration details. However, the Board reminds practitioners that the best and most reliable measure of your registration status is online on the National Register. Employers can check the registration status of all practitioners at www.ahpra.gov.au. If your name appears on the register, you are deemed to be registered, even if the registration expiry date has passed. AHPRA removes the name of practitioners whose registration has lapsed from the Register. The Board reminds employers of their responsibility to check the registration status

of new employees on the online register, and to check appropriate photo identification and references.

Registration renewal dates: Lining up with 30 November

Pharmacists in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania seeking to renew their registration after their registration expired on 31 December 2010 were able to do so during the subsequent one month 'late period' built into the National Law, which ended on January 31. Practitioners who did not renew their registration on time (by the end of the 'late period') were removed from the Register. A fast track application process is in place for pharmacists who did not intend to let their registration lapse. However the Board reminds pharmacists that they may not practise until their name is restored to the Register of Pharmacists after they have re-applied for registration.

Dispensing PBS prescriptions at pharmacies not approved to dispense pharmaceutical benefits

The Board has developed a policy to address the issue of supply of medications from pharmacies not approved to dispense pharmaceutical benefits. The *National Health Act 1953* and the National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Regulations dictate that only pharmacists practising at "approved" pharmacies can supply pharmaceutical benefits.

The Board is working with the Pharmaceutical Benefits Division of the Department of Health and Ageing on finalising information to be displayed at pharmacies which, although licensed under relevant State/Territory laws and regulations as pharmacies, are not approved to supply pharmaceutical benefits ("unapproved" pharmacies). The purpose of the information is to make the public fully aware of the consequences of having prescriptions which are eligible to be supplied as pharmaceutical benefits, dispensed at "unapproved" pharmacies. These consequences include:

- payments made for prescriptions not contributing to PBS Safety Net Records
- any repeats issued not being valid as concessional, repatriation, general or safety net pharmaceutical benefit prescriptions if subsequently presented at an "approved" pharmacy and
- not being able to obtain a refund from Medicare, for the amount paid over and above the gazetted PBS copayment for a medicine, for prescriptions dispensed.

The information will also outline that pharmacists practising in "unapproved pharmacies" where prescriptions may be presented by patients, cannot send prescriptions to an "approved" pharmacy for them to be dispensed as concessional, repatriation, general or safety net pharmaceutical benefit prescriptions there, and returned to the "unapproved" pharmacy for collection by the patient.

Strategic planning

The Board held a strategic planning meeting and devoted time to developing and documenting its strategic priorities for the next three years.

Bill Kelly
Acting Chair
8 February 2011