



Communiqué

4 November 2011

The Pharmacy Board of Australia met on 28 October 2011 at the national office of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) in Melbourne.

Renewal of registration

Registration renewal is due by 30 November 2011. Over one third of pharmacists have so far responded to AHPRA's e-mail reminders and applied for online registration renewal. Renewed applicants have also commenced receiving their renewal of registration receipt, registration certificate and wallet-size registration card by post. Registrants who have yet to renew their registration will receive a hard copy application form soon, if they have not already done so. Applicants for renewal of registration are also requested to complete the workforce survey.

Contact details and registration status can be checked through AHPRA's Online Services. To assist AHPRA to effectively manage the registration process, pharmacists should ensure that their contact details, including their e-mail address, are up-to-date. To update contact details, go to www.ahpra.gov.au/login.aspx and use your AHPRA user ID and pass code to log. If you do not have a user ID or have forgotten it, go to www.ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/Contact-Us.aspx to complete an online enquiry. The progress of registration renewal applications can be tracked online.

The Board strongly recommends pharmacists renew their registration online to minimise any delays.

Written Examination eligibility criteria

The Board accepted a recommendation from its Registration and Examination Committee to amend its written examination eligibility criteria. The written examination which is conducted bimonthly on behalf of the Board by the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) is the prerequisite to the oral examination. Provisionally registered intern pharmacists will now be admitted to the written examination after completing at least 30% of approved supervised practice hours (the previous requirement was for at least 50%).

APC in consultation with the Board had devised an examination schedule to provide interns with two opportunities to sit the written examination (if required) prior to an oral examination, even though most interns are successful at their first attempt. With more interns now commencing supervised practice hours later than pharmacy course completion dates, in accordance with training site arrangements, some interns if obliged to meet the 50% requirement were only eligible to sit the written examination once prior to the oral examinations scheduled at the end of their internship, and if unsuccessful in the written exam, would consequently be delayed in meeting the requirements for general registration.

Reducing the written examination eligibility criteria from completing 50% of supervised practice hours to completing 30%, aligns the criteria with that set by some previous state and territory pharmacy boards.

The new eligibility criteria will be effective from 1 January 2012.

Labelling of Dose Administration Aids (DAAs)

As outlined in the Board's Guidelines on specialised supply arrangements "Dispensed medicines in a DAA are to be labelled in accordance with any statutory provisions and in accordance with these guidelines with a view to maximising the benefits of the therapy, improving the patients understanding of the treatment, enhancing compliance and minimising adverse effects." The guidelines also state "The label on the DAA should maximise compliance, promote usability and minimise error. It should identify clearly the name of the patient, the name and address of the pharmacy, the name, strength and dose form of the medicines, the directions for use, and the date of filling."

The Board agreed that in relation to labelling of Dose Administration Aids that best practice is to include both active ingredient and brand name but when circumstances necessitate such as space limitations, that the active ingredient / Australian approved name be used. The Board will amend its Guidelines on specialised supply arrangements to provide clarity on this issue.

National E-Health Transition Authority Limited (NEHTA) and eSignatures Project

The Board met with representatives from the National E-Health Transition Authority Limited (NEHTA) who briefed the Board on the latest developments on the eSignatures Project. This encompasses future processes involving the transmission of clinical documents between healthcare organisations requiring the signature of document authors e.g. prescriptions and repeat authorisations. The Board will provide input on the draft recommendations and findings of this project, in particular the issues related to prescriptions and matters affecting pharmacists such as dispense records. The Board will continue to be kept up-to-date on this project.

Provisional Registration and Internships

Most student cohorts of approved pharmacy programs are nearing completion of their courses at this time of year. We are also approaching the peak registration period for the pharmacy profession which includes provisional registration for the commencement of internships and renewal of registration of pharmacists.

This raises two important issues. Firstly, the need for pharmacy students to ensure timely lodgment of provisional registration application forms to enable commencement of internships on time. The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) advises pharmacy students who are graduating soon to apply for provisional registration on line at www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Graduate-Applications.aspx. Clear guidance is provided on the website on how to lodge applications. Applicants must ensure that all required information is provided to avoid delays in registration.

Secondly, there may still be final year pharmacy students in need of an internship position to complete the required 1824 hours of approved supervised practice. Pharmacists who may be in a position to offer an internship position are encouraged to consider this.

Accreditation standards for accreditation of pharmacy programs in Australia

The Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) is the accreditation authority for the pharmacy profession and accredits pharmacy programs in Australia. Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory, the Board receives accreditation reports on pharmacy programs provided by APC, assessed against accreditation standards, and considers these reports for the purpose of deciding whether to approve accredited courses as providing qualifications for registration. The accreditation standards currently used to accredit programs are the standards used since prior to the commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The Board considers that it is timely for the accreditation standards to be reviewed and has directed APC to conduct a review including against international standards.

Stephen Marty
Chair
4 November 2011