

Chair's report

Pharmacy is leading the way in the establishment of an audit system to test health practitioners' compliance with mandatory registration standards under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

The introduction of the National Scheme in 2010 meant the setting of mandatory registration standards that all practitioners must meet in order to practise:

- criminal history
- professional indemnity insurance
- recency of practice
- continuing professional development.

To investigate how the National Boards might test practitioner compliance with the standards, the Pharmacy Board delegated authority to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to conduct an audit pilot of registered pharmacists (*Pharmacy Board of Australia: news*, October 2011).

A random sample of pharmacists was selected from the register of practitioners earlier this year to participate in the pilot, which is presently being finalised. Selected pharmacists completed an audit checklist and provided supporting documentation to AHPRA. The auditing of the criminal history standard is undertaken through CrimTrac.

The findings of the pilot audit of pharmacists will inform audits of all other regulated health professions in the future. The results will determine the frequency, size, and type of audits required, as well as establish a methodology and a process for reporting findings.

Individual pharmacists will be advised of their own audit outcomes and the overall results from the pilot will be reported on the AHPRA and Board websites.

The establishment of a practical and efficient audit system is an important aspect of ensuring the integrity of all regulated health professions in Australia and the Board is pleased pharmacy has been able to take a lead role in its development.

For more information, visit the 'Audit Pilot' page (<http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards/Audit-Pilot.aspx>) on the *Registration Standards* section of the Board's website.

Stephen Marty
Chair, Pharmacy Board of Australia

Snapshot of registered workforce

There are 26,434 pharmacists registered in Australia, according to new Board data released in May.

The Board has published the first quarterly data profiling Australia's pharmacy workforce, including a number of statistical breakdowns about registrants such as state/territory, age and gender by registration type.

State	General	Limited		Non-practising	Provisional	Total	% By State
		Postgrad / training	Teaching / research				
ACT	373			14	23	410	1.55%
NSW	7,440	6		209	573	8,228	31.13%
NT	162			3	20	185	0.7%
QLD	4,699	3	1	75	373	5,121	19.37%
SA	1,728			46	129	1,903	7.2%
TAS	576			5	46	627	2.37%
VIC	5,865	2		280	361	6,508	24.62%
WA	2,550	1		53	231	2,835	10.72%
Not Stated	457			157	3	617	2.33%
Total	23,820	12	1	842	1,759	26,434	

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme requires that information about every registered health practitioner in Australia is published on a single national register of practitioners. As a result, it is now possible to produce accurate reports on the number of practitioners registered in each profession in Australia. It is one of the significant added values of national registration and is of enormous value for workforce planning and to help improve access to health services.



Find the Pharmacy Board's statistics in the *About* section (<http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/About/Statistics.aspx>) of its website.

Continuing professional development – new FAQ

The Board has published answers to pharmacists' most frequently asked questions about its continuing professional development (CPD) registration standard and guideline.

CPD is one of the mandatory registration standards that all health practitioners, including pharmacists, must meet in order to practise. CPD is the means by which members of the profession continue to maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence, and develop the personal and professional qualities required throughout their professional lives.

The *Continuing professional development registration standard*, approved by Australian state and territory health ministers, details the requirements for pharmacists to meet this standard – <http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>.

To further assist pharmacists and interns, the Board has published a supporting guideline and additional information in response to frequently asked questions about meeting annual requirements, CPD activities and records.

Pharmacists and interns are encouraged to read the recently released FAQ, which are found under the *Codes and Guidelines* section (<http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/FAQ.aspx>) of the Board's website.

Dispensing guidelines – barcode scanners

The Board remains concerned that there are some pharmacists who fail to practise in accordance with the Board's *Guidelines for dispensing of medicines*, particularly in relation to the use of barcode scanners.

Under the guidance on dispensing errors and near misses, pharmacists are required to take all reasonable steps to minimise the occurrence of errors. The use of barcode scanners is considered by the Board to be an important part of taking reasonable steps to ensure patient safety. The scanners are a simple tool to assist in the minimisation of dispensing errors due to selection of the wrong product. They will not detect data entry errors and are not to be used for data input.

The guideline requirement applies to every pharmacist dispensing anywhere in Australia – there are no state/territory differences.

Failure to comply with the guideline requiring the use of scanners at the end of the dispensing process continues to contribute to dispensing errors. The consequences for the victims of such incidents can be serious, including fatalities. This is compounded when a final check is not performed and the consumer is not counselled on the safe and effective use of the medicine by a pharmacist. This check is frequently the point where an error is detected either by the pharmacist or the consumer not recognising the pack shown during counselling.

The Board reminds pharmacists that it considers such poor professional practice to be a serious matter which may warrant a finding of unprofessional conduct.

Pharmacists involved in such practices may be referred to a performance and professional standards panel hearing.

Pharmacists should check with their indemnity insurer regarding the consequences for liability when they fail to comply with dispensing standards and guidelines.

Find a full copy of the Board's *Guidelines for dispensing of medicines* under the *Codes and Guidelines* section (<http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines.aspx>) of its website.

Dispensing multiple repeat prescriptions at one time

The Board also draws pharmacists' attention to the guidance on 'Dispensing multiple repeat prescriptions at one time'.

It states that the simultaneous supply of multiple quantities of a particular medicine (that is, the supply of multiple repeats at once) may not be in accordance with the prescriber's intention and is contrary to good pharmaceutical practice.

The supply of multiple repeats at the one time is permitted under Regulation 24 of the National Health (Pharmaceutical Benefits) Regulations 1960, and each prescription for multiple supplies should be so endorsed. Dispensing of multiple quantities of any prescriptions should only occur at the specific direction of the prescriber on each occasion, unless exceptional circumstances exist to the satisfaction of the pharmacist, and an appropriate notation is made to that effect on the prescription and in the dispensing record.

Find full details of the 'Dispensing multiple repeat prescriptions at one time' guidance in the Board's *Guidelines for dispensing of medicines* under the *Codes and Guidelines* section (<http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines.aspx>) of its website.

National intern training programs

It has come to the Board's attention that some accredited providers of the pharmacy intern training program may have attempted to influence interns in their decision of which intern training program to undertake. The Board advises that interns should be free to make their own choice about their intern training program, and as such should not be inappropriately influenced by their employer or the intern training program provider.

Social media and the registered pharmacist

Many pharmacists use electronic media on a daily basis in both their private and professional lives.

However, engaging with social media such as Facebook and Twitter without careful thought can have potential negative legal and ethical consequences for practitioners. For example, issues of confidentiality, privacy and therapeutic boundaries can be threatened in various ways by social media use.

It is important that pharmacists are familiar with the risks and know what steps to take to avoid them.

The Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and the National Boards are currently developing a social media policy to help guide practitioners on the acceptable engagement in social media, from a registration perspective. This will be published in coming months.

In the meantime, practitioners can consult the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia document Guidance of using the internet or social media (<http://www.psa.org.au/archives/5991>). The guidance document is designed to help ensure that pharmacists and consumers can confidently, and with understanding of known risks, use the internet and social media in disseminating and receiving information about health and health care issues. This useful document is freely available in the 'Policies' section of the Society's website at www.psa.org.au.

Single registration number for life

A pharmacist's current registration number will now stay with each practitioner for life following a simplification to registers of health practitioners.

The implementation of the lifetime registration number was part of recent changes to streamline the registration system. It also means that from now on, keeping track of the unique registration number is easier.

Previously, if a pharmacist took a break from your registration, he/she was issued with a new number when

they re-registered. Sometimes, they were also assigned different registration numbers for each registration within a profession (such as general and provisional). These numbers have now been consolidated into a current single registration number.

The registration number that is currently published on the public register is the one a pharmacist will keep for life. If a pharmacist is registered in different professions he/she will have a different registration number for each profession.

Smaller certificates equals smaller environmental footprint

When renewing registration, practitioners will notice that their certificate of registration is now A5 size and is accompanied by a wallet-sized card with their registration details. The change has been made to halve the amount of paper used for this purpose. The content and style of the certificate remains unchanged.

Compounding of veterinary formulations

The Board's Compounding Working Party recently met with a representative of the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority where it discussed the implications of the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994*.

The Act makes it an offence for a pharmacist to supply any formulation or product for animal use other than on the written instruction or order of a veterinary practitioner, whether scheduled or unscheduled. This requirement does not apply to proprietary products that are registered under the Code and are unscheduled or included in Schedules 2 or 3. Exemptions which apply under the Therapeutics Goods Act for human use do not apply to preparations for animal use.

Advertising guidelines

The Pharmacy Board and other National Boards will shortly participate in a review of the advertising guidelines.

It is expected that the revised guidelines will focus on compliance as opposed to the educative nature of the present guidelines. This is consistent with the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme transitioning to a mature scheme.

The Board would like to take the opportunity to remind all pharmacy business owners of the obligations that individual pharmacists working in their businesses or franchises have under the present guidelines.

The guidelines aim to support the provisions of the National Law, to protect the public from advertising that is false, deceptive and misleading, and provide guidance to practitioners about advertising of health services. Any information provided in an advertisement for a regulated health service should be reliable and useful, and assist consumers to make informed decisions about accessing services.

Pharmacists are responsible for the style and content of all advertising material associated with the provision of their goods and services. They may not delegate accountability for ensuring the accuracy of advertising and compliance to a manager, director, media or advertising agency, or other unregistered person.

Employed pharmacists may not have direct control over the content of an advertisement. However, they are required to review the content of any advertising of their services and to take reasonable steps to prevent any noncompliance with the guidelines.

The delivery of pharmacy services in Australia creates some unique challenges for the profession in meeting advertising guidelines. It is important that the profession considers draft revised guidelines when they are released for consultation.

How to make a notification

Practitioners and members of the public concerned about advertising of pharmacy health services are able to make a notification to AHPRA. Information on how to make a notification is available at www.ahpra.gov.au/notifications-and-outcomes/make-a-notification.aspx.

Website and email for important information

The best way to stay in touch with news and updates from the Board is to visit our website regularly and to make sure AHPRA has pharmacists' up-to-date contact details.

Currently, the Board has the email addresses of 96% of pharmacists, enabling it to contact practitioners with news and updates on registration standards as well as professional standards, codes, guidelines and position statements that guide the profession.

This level of email coverage is vital to the Board and AHPRA being able to contact practitioners rapidly with important information. Pharmacists are therefore reminded to update their contact details with AHPRA if email addresses change when, for example, they move job or internet service provider. Practitioners are also reminded to ensure that the email address they provide will not reject Board correspondence as spam.

All important documents and the latest information on Board activities and consultations are published on the website at www.pharmacyboard.gov.au.

Contacting the Board

The Pharmacy Board of Australia and AHPRA can be contacted by telephone on 1300 419 495.

More information on the Board is available at www.pharmacyboard.gov.au and more information on AHPRA is available at www.ahpra.gov.au.

An online enquiry form is available on both websites under *Contact Us*.

Mail correspondence can be addressed to: Stephen Marty, Chair, Pharmacy Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958, Melbourne Vic 3001.

