



Communiqué

20 December 2013

The Pharmacy Board of Australia (the Board) met on 13 December 2013 at the national office of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) in Melbourne.

Managing health records and other information

The Board has received reports of incidents where pharmacists have become the target of *ransomware*, a type of malicious software which can block access to a computer system and encrypt data such as patient files. A sum of money is demanded by the source to enable unencrypted patient data to be accessed.

The Board's [Code of conduct for registered health practitioners](#) states:

'Maintaining clear and accurate health records is essential for the continuing good care of patients or clients. Good practice involves:

- b) ensuring that records are held securely and are not subject to unauthorised access, regardless of whether they are held electronically and/or in hard copy.'*

Pharmacists are advised to discuss appropriate methods of protecting their electronic patient records with computer software and hardware providers. Pharmacists are also reminded of their obligations to maintain patient records securely, especially when considering solutions for back-up storage of such information.

Update on the review of registration standards and guidelines

The review of the Board's registration standards and guidelines is a significant body of work being carried out by the Board. It involves a two-stage consultation process. Preliminary consultation is conducted with a core group of stakeholders to seek feedback on clarity of the consultation documents. This is then followed by public consultation during which stakeholders, pharmacists and the public can provide feedback on consultation papers published on the Board's [website](#).

The current registration standards and guidelines apply until revised versions are implemented. Revised registration standards are published after being approved by the Ministerial Council¹.

A summary of the Board's progress in the review of registration standards and guidelines is provided below.

Registration standards

English language skills and Criminal history

AHPRA, on behalf of the Board, is currently undertaking public consultation on these standards. The closing date for submissions is 23 December 2013. The Board will make further announcements on the next steps in early 2014.

¹ The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council. The Ministerial Council comprises the ministers of the governments of the participating jurisdictions and the Commonwealth with portfolio responsibility for health.

Remaining registration standards and related guidelines

The Board is currently reviewing the preliminary consultation feedback received from a core group of stakeholders on the following registration standards and related guidelines:

- *Recency of practice registration standard.*
- *Continuing professional development registration standard and guidelines.*
- *Professional indemnity insurance arrangements registration standard.*
- *Supervised practice arrangement registration standard.*
- *Examinations for general registration standard.*

These registration standards will be finalised in early 2014 for the public consultation phase.

Common guidelines and Code of conduct

The Board will be publishing revised and new common codes and guidelines in 2014.

The first lot of documents will be published in February. They are the:

- revised *Advertising guidelines*
- *Social media policy*
- revised *Mandatory reporting guidelines*, and
- revised *Code of conduct*.

These guidelines, policy and code will come into effect in March 2014, and all registered health practitioners will need to meet these new standards.

The Board consulted widely this year on the draft versions of these documents (and continue to consult on other important documents, see the *Consultations* page on the Board website).

Much work has also gone into making sure that the format and language used in the documents meet plain language requirements, to make it easier to access and understand the important information in them. This month we are running a series of focus groups that will test the way the documents are presented, so that we can choose a design that supports ease of reading and understanding.

More information will be published on the AHPRA and National Boards' websites in February.

Board specific guidelines

The Board has commenced its review of guidelines for pharmacists which will be completed during 2014. The current guidelines are published on the Board's [website](#).

Guidelines on compounding of medicines (compounding guideline)

The Board has previously advised that it was undertaking a review of its *Guideline on Extemporaneous dispensing (compounding)*, which is currently published as part of its *Guidelines for dispensing of medicines*.

The Board proposes to publish its revised compounding guideline as a separate guideline. The revised guideline will include guidance on 'complex compounding' which is defined in the current edition of the *Australian Pharmaceutical Formulary and Handbook (Ed 22)*.

The process of developing a revised compounding guideline included the formation of a Compounding Working Group which included Board members and stakeholder representation. The Board has now completed preliminary consultation on the revised guideline and will finalise the guideline for public consultation in early 2014.

Start of internships

In October 2013, AHPRA advised final-year students that as an alternative to lodging a paper application, they could go [online](#) and lodge an application for provisional registration

prior to completion of their approved program of study. All applicants are required to return some supporting documents to AHPRA by mail to complete their application.

As most interns are due to start their internships at this time of year, the Board reminds them of their legal obligations as provisionally registered pharmacists to comply with the Board's registration standards, including the *Supervised practice arrangements registration standard*.

Supervised practice cannot be accumulated unless an intern holds provisional registration and has had their period of supervised practice approved by the Board **prior to starting their internship**.

Any queries regarding provisional registration and approval of supervised practice can be directed to AHPRA by phoning 1300 419 495.

Pharmacy renewal now in late period

Pharmacists across Australia were reminded by AHPRA and the Board that their registration was due for renewal **by 30 November 2013**. By 1 December 94 percent of pharmacists had renewed and 1 percent had 'opted out'. Of those renewing, more than 95 percent have done so online.

If you didn't renew your registration on time, you can still renew until **31 December 2013**, but a late payment fee will apply. The quickest and easiest way to renew your registration is [online](#).

AHPRA and the Board want to make sure that pharmacists who wish to renew their registration do so before they risk it lapsing. Renewal reminders will continue to be sent throughout the late period. Using the 'opt out' service and registering your decision to not renew registration puts a stop to renewal reminders.

Under the National Law², if you haven't renewed by 31 December 2013 your registration will lapse. Your name will be removed from the online [Register of Pharmacists](#) and you must cease to practise immediately. To resume practising, you must make a new application for registration.

Fast track application forms will be available on the Board website under [Forms](#) or by phoning the AHPRA Customer Service Team on 1300 419 495 during January. If submitting a fast track application, you cannot practise until your application is processed and your registration details are updated on the national register.

An FAQ about renewal is available on the [Pharmacy Board website](#).

Compliments of the season

On behalf of the Pharmacy Board of Australia, I extend best wishes and compliments of the season to all pharmacists and our stakeholders.

Stephen Marty
Chair
20 December 2013

² The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).