

PRACTICAL PRESCRIBING

Molly Courtenay helps resolve everyday issues for nurse prescribers



Q I am a qualified independent/supplementary nurse prescriber. I am sometimes required to prescribe

unlicensed medicines where I work. I know legislative changes took place in December 2009, however, I am still not certain whether I am able to prescribe these medicines. Can you advise?

A A circular was produced by the NMC last month, enabling appropriately qualified nurses

to independently prescribe unlicensed medicine, following legislative changes made in December 2009.

The circular updates the information in the NMCs 'Standard of proficiency for nurse and midwife prescribers',¹ and clarifies the requirements when unlicensed medicines are prescribed by nurses.

If you do prescribe unlicensed medicines you must be sure that there is not an alternative licensed medication that would meet the needs of the patient. You must also be sure that there is sufficient evidence that the medicine is safe.

You are responsible for prescribing the unlicensed medicine and overseeing the patient's care. The patient must agree to the prescription and be clear about the implications of prescribing such a drug.

You need to document the medicine prescribed and the reason for prescribing it in the patient's notes. If the patient has any adverse reactions, these must be reported via the MHRA's Yellow Card Scheme.

The NMC has also produced a second circular for higher education institutions. This circular makes it clear that independent/supplemen-

tary prescribing programmes must be amended with regards to content and learning outcomes to reflect that nurses can now prescribe unlicensed medicines.

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- Please send prescribing related questions to sarah.wild@haymarket.com

References

1. NMC (2006). Standards of proficiency for nurse and midwife prescribers. London: NMC