

## Supporting resources for managing S8, S4B & S4D medicines in NSW

Medicines listed as S8 in The Poisons Standard (SUSMP) and as S4B and S4D in the NSW Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation (PTGR) 2008 can carry higher risk for patients and require greater vigilance and professional care when being prescribed and supplied. The Pharmacy Council of NSW and pharmacy representative organisations aim to raise awareness of these responsibilities and offer pharmacists guidance when managing these medicines, with a particular focus on medicines categorised as monitored medicines in NSW.

These concerns are supported in the report by the [Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare](#) which identified 2-3% of all hospital admissions in Australia are medication related. Of further concern; every day nearly 150 hospitalisations, 14 emergency department admissions, and 3 deaths involve opioid use according to [Department of Health and Aged Care](#).

The high-risk monitored medicines may cause significant patient harm or death if they are misused or used inappropriately. They are also more likely to be presented on a forged or altered prescription or requested in a dose or frequency that may be outside of accepted therapeutic standards.

Pharmacists are reminded of Clauses 54 and 109 of the PTGR 2008 which state “A pharmacist must not supply any restricted substance (c54) or drug of addiction (c109) in a quantity, or for a purpose, that does not accord with the recognised therapeutic standard of what is appropriate in the circumstances”.

The accompanying **Monitored Medicines Dispensing Flow Chart Protocol** is designed to remind all pharmacy staff handling these medicines that greater care and consideration needs to be applied to reduce the risk for patients, pharmacists, prescribers and the public.

### Proprietor Oversight:

Proprietorial oversight and engagement by all owners is expected by the NSW regulatory agencies. Often incidents and regulatory notifications could have been prevented through better procedures and protocols. Proprietors must ensure they have adequate oversight of their business, including protocols in place to manage monitored medicines transactions. The following are some suggestions for proprietors and management.

- Develop robust procedures to ensure staff consistently supply monitored medicines in a safe and professional manner.
- Understand and implement the application of risk minimisation strategies for these medicines.
- Ensure pharmacists are reminded of their professional obligations as autonomous practitioners.
- Consider having a second pharmacist check S8 prescriptions when multiple pharmacists are on duty.
- Regularly audit S8 transactions for compliance with legislation and prevention of diversion or misuse.
  - Consider random audits on S8 invoices from wholesalers to ensure stock is accounted for, received, and recorded.
  - Consider audits on high volume transactions as this may detect inappropriate supply as well as some rare cases of staff diverting S8s.
  - Consider reports on S8 register adjustments and reversals.
- Maintain oversight of handling and storage of high-risk medicines.
- Develop and implement a protocol for storing cancelled S8 duplicates and documentation in compliance with local legislation. It should be readily accessible if requested by regulators.
- Ensure regular staff training is provided to ensure compliance with policies and procedures.
- Regularly review current opioid therapeutic guidelines and the pharmacy’s protocols for supplying these medicines.

- Regularly communicate with prescribers regarding compliance with the legislation when prescribing and supplying monitored medicines. This is especially important for pharmacies working closely with medical centres.

## **Resources:**

The following links to resources are not exhaustive and should not be considered definitive. Pharmacists are encouraged to incorporate self-directed education into their learning plan on the indications and supply of these medicines and to take advantage of the wealth of information available on this topic.

### **NSW Health**

[SafeScript NSW](#)

[NSW Pain Management Network - Opioid recommendations in General Practice](#)

[NSW Health Pharmacists Home page](#)

[NSW Health - Lost, stolen or forged prescriptions link](#)

[Misuse of fentanyl patches](#)

### **Pharmacy Council News**

Forged prescriptions – May 2022

<https://pharmacycouncil.cmail19.com/t/ViewEmail/j/F65ACB054096A1132540EF23F30FEDED?alternativeLink=True>

Shopping for fentanyl article – December 2021

<https://www.pharmacycouncil.nsw.gov.au/shopping-fentanyl>

Scams to obtain S8s via phone orders – January 2019

<https://www.pharmacycouncil.nsw.gov.au/beware-%E2%80%93-scams-obtain-schedule-8-drugs-telephoned-orders>

### **NPS Links**

[High-risk prescription opioid use: 10 things you need to know](#)

[Podcast 36: Approaching difficult conversations with patients about opioid use](#)

[Opioids and antidepressants: which combinations to avoid](#)

### **NSW Legislation**

Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008

<https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/sl-2008-0392#pt.1>

*This resource has been prepared for NSW pharmacists by the Pharmacy Council of NSW, PDL, Pharmacy Guild of Australia (NSW), PSA (NSW) and SHPA*