



Promoting the appropriate use,
and reducing the abuse and misuse of monitored drugs in Nova Scotia.

March 25, 2011

RE: Notification of Charges to Prescribers & Pharmacists

Dear Prescribers & Pharmacists:

Over the past year the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP) has been working with the Nova Scotia Chiefs of Police Association and meeting with various law enforcement agencies across the province in an effort to share information between law enforcement and the Program. The focus of these meetings is to build a stronger relationship with law enforcement and share information on the issues of diversion and inappropriate use of monitored drugs. Through our discussions with law enforcement, it has become apparent that increased information sharing is essential to work collaboratively on the issue of monitored drug misuse and abuse.

The NSPMP, under the *Prescription Monitoring Act*, has the ability to report inappropriate use of monitored drugs to a prescriber and/or pharmacist if the release of information furthers the objects of the Program, which is to promote the appropriate use of monitored drugs; and the reduction of abuse or misuse of monitored drugs. As a result of increased discussions with law enforcement and in keeping with the Program's mandate, the NSPMP will provide information to prescribers and pharmacies about their patients when charges have been laid related to a monitored drug. Only charges pertaining to drugs which are monitored by the NSPMP will be communicated. The purpose of this notification is to keep prescribers and pharmacies informed, as the NSPMP cannot dictate professional practice.

To address this new initiative, the NSPMP has recently made revisions to the Working with Law Enforcement Policy and Guidelines. This policy is available on the NSPMP website at www.nspmp.ca and we hope you take an opportunity to review this important information.

Should you have any concerns, please contact the NSPMP at 1-877-476-7767 or (902) 496-7123.

Sincerely,

Denise Pellerin
Manager, Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program



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Important Information to Consider

The NSPMP has identified some important information which may assist prescribers and pharmacists.

Suggestions for Prescribing:

- Minimize the total quantity of medication prescribed. A small quantity of medication may help reduce the risk of diversion.
- Consider prescribing smaller quantities of monitored drugs. According to law enforcement, large quantities of monitored drugs may increase the risk of theft, assault/personal injury, and diversion.
- Consider using long acting medications when appropriate.
- Consider using generic medications when appropriate. According to law enforcement, generic medications are not as highly sought after for the purpose of misuse or abuse as the brand name medications.
- Optimize the use of non-opioid medications when appropriate.
- Know your patients. Patients seeking to obtain monitored drugs for the purpose of diversion, and/or misuse or abuse may:
 - Request large quantities of medications
 - Request only short acting and brand name be prescribed
 - Resist a change to their dose of medication (decreasing dose) or drug (changing to a generic)
 - Target prescribers working in busy or solo practices.
- Implement comprehensive prescribing agreements/contracts with patients.

Utilize PMP Services:

- Request patient profiles from PMP. Profile information can be provided to prescribers and pharmacists over the phone or via fax.
- Utilize the NSPMP agreement/contract monitoring service. The Program can monitor prescriber agreements/contracts on a weekly basis to ensure adherence.
- Keep PMP duplicate pads in a secure location. If a PMP duplicate pad should be lost or stolen, please contact PMP immediately.
- Contact the NSPMP Medical Consultant. Dr. MacDougall is available to assist prescribers and pharmacists with questions or concerns and can be reached at 902-478-0546.
- Contact the Program should you have concerns about diversion or monitored drug misuse.



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Resources:

- Establish relationships with local pharmacies and law enforcement.
- If you believe a patient may be experiencing problems associated with substance use, such as opioid dependency, you may wish to consider a referral to Addiction Services. For information on contacting your nearest Addiction Services Program please refer to the following website link <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/addictions/where-to-go/addictionservices.asp>, or contact the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program to assist in accessing services available in your community.
- Attend the Continuing Medical/Continuing Pharmacy Education Program on the topic of Drug Diversion. The program is designed to improve collaboration and communication between physicians and pharmacists in the understanding of drug diversion. The next session will be April 19, 2011 in the Founder's Room at Soldier's Memorial Hospital in Middleton, NS from 7:00pm–9:30pm. For more information, please contact Nadine MacDonald, Program Coordinator, Continuing Medical Education at 902-494-1484. For future sessions of the Drug Diversion CME, please visit <http://cme.medicine.dal.ca/Diversion.htm>.
- Canadian Guideline for Safe and Effective Use of Opioids for Chronic Non-Cancer Pain and the Opioid Manager Tool. The guideline and tool can be found at the following website link <http://nationalpaincentre.mcmaster.ca/opioid/>.