



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

Important Information for Prescribers and Pharmacists

The Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program's (NSPMP) legislated mandate is *"to promote the appropriate use and reduce the abuse or misuse of monitored drugs."* We believe that it is important to communicate relevant information about the NSPMP to prescribers and pharmacists.

The NSPMP bulletin is a way to communicate key information which can assist providers to understand the Program and issues pertaining to monitored drugs.

Drug Misuse/Abuse Potential

The Prescription Monitoring Program has received anecdotal information from various stakeholders regarding the potential misuse/abuse of tramadol in certain populations of individuals.

Although tramadol is not a monitored drug, the Program determined that advising prescribers and pharmacists of this information is in keeping with our mandate.

It is important to understand that by providing this information, the Program is not suggesting that the prescribing and dispensing of tramadol should be discontinued.

The purpose of providing this information is to keep prescribers and pharmacists informed so they can screen for potential aberrant behaviors.

Atlantic Provinces Inter-Professional Pain Conference

The QEII Pain Management Unit of CDHA Pain Services is presenting an Atlantic Provinces Inter-Professional Pain Conference on Friday, Sept. 28/12 and Saturday, Sept. 29/12. The conference will be held at the World Trade & Convention Centre in Halifax, NS.

This program is designed to provide an update in the field of pain management for family physicians, specialists, and other health professionals who have an interest in assisting patients suffering with chronic pain. The course will cover an intensive curriculum within a short period of time. The program will give participants an appreciation of the importance of taking an interdisciplinary approach to treating and managing pain, as well as provide updates on key areas of pain management.

For more information or to register, please click on the following link <http://nsanesthesia.ca/s/apipc>

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Contact Information

PO Box 2200, Halifax NS B3J 3C6
T: 902.496.7123 or
TF: 1.877.476.7767
F: 902.481.3157
E: pmp@medavie.bluecross.ca



Altering of Duplicate Prescriptions

During recent months, the NSPMP has received information that duplicate prescriptions identified as having been altered; have continued to be dispensed. It is the position of the NSPMP, as well as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists, that the altering of a duplicate prescription is considered a criminal act.

For Physicians

Information obtained from the College of Physicians and Surgeons states, "*The College recognizes that altering a prescription is a criminal act. Physicians have a responsibility to be aware of and to respect this law. The absence of consequences for patients forging or altering a prescription for a controlled drug is of concern to us.*"

In situations where it has been identified that a duplicate script has been altered, the prescriber and pharmacist should not allow the prescription to be filled. Law enforcement should be contacted. **The Program has been advised that the responsibility to contact law enforcement lies with the provider that identifies the alteration.** The NSPMP should also be contacted and advised that a prescription has been altered and a copy of the script should be forwarded to our attention.

Should you have any questions about the information contained in this section, please contact Dr. Peter MacDougall, NSPMP Medical Consultant, at 902-478-0546. To contact the NSPMP, please call 902-496-7123 or toll free 1-877-476-7767.

For Pharmacists

The Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists recognizes that prescription forgeries are a significant issue and contribute to the diversion of prescription drugs to the street. Forgeries occur when existing prescriptions are altered or when an entirely new false prescription document is created. This is an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada. As it is the responsibility of pharmacists to determine the authenticity of prescriptions, diligence in screening for forged prescriptions is important. The (new) NSCP Code of Ethics incorporates the following ethical principles:

- Registrants support the appropriate use, and the reduction of the abuse or misuse, of monitored drugs.
- Registrants take appropriate measures to mitigate potential public risks that may arise from their practice decisions.



When a pharmacist confirms with the prescriber that a prescription has been forged (created fraudulently or altered in any way), pharmacists are expected to make appropriate decisions based on the available information, keeping in mind the need to protect the public from the risks of drug diversion. When forgeries are reported to law enforcement, there is also a responsibility to report forgeries for any Controlled Substances to the Office of Controlled Substances, Health Canada using the following form: <http://www.nspharmacists.ca/resources/documents/ForgeryReportForm.pdf>. A copy of the form should also be provided to the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists.

The NSPMP believes that the safety and health of pharmacists, store staff and customers should take priority in any situation. No pharmacist should put themselves or others in harm's way enforcing policy or procedures

Methadone Maintenance Treatment Monitoring

On June 6, 2012, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of NS released the Methadone Maintenance Treatment Handbook. In section 4.3 MMT Program Documentation, subsection 4.3.1 The Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP) it states "***Patients may not receive a prescription for methadone from more than one source at a time. For this reason, prior to initiating treatment, the MMT physician must contact [NSPMP](#).***

A current patient profile must be obtained and the patient must be enrolled in the NSPMP Methadone Program Monitoring Service. A current patient profile can be obtained either through the NSPMP eAccess web application or by contacting NSPMP directly. This service will provide the physician with a patient drug profile prior to initiating treatment. Also, NSPMP conducts weekly monitoring of patient profiles and advises physicians if the patient has obtained a monitored drug from other prescribers during the course of their treatment."

In accordance with the new guidelines, the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program will require physicians, who provide methadone maintenance therapy, to enrol their patients in the Methadone Program Monitoring Service. Once patients are enrolled, methadone program monitoring will be conducted on a weekly basis. The Program will advise physicians if their patient has obtained a monitored drug from other prescribers during the course of their treatment.

In cases where a patient is no longer receiving methadone maintenance therapy, the prescriber must provide the NSPMP with a discharge form in a timely manner so that the patient can be removed from the methadone program monitoring.

The required enrolment and discharge forms can be obtained from the NSPMP by contacting one of our Customer Service Representatives at 902-496-7123 or toll free at 1-877-476-7767. Our office is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 8 am and 5 pm.



College of Physicians and Surgeons “Good Pill, Bad Pill” Media Campaign

On May 1, 2012, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia (CPSNS) introduced the “Good Pill, Bad Pill” media campaign. The purpose of this campaign is to support physicians in addressing prescription opioid abuse and diversion. As part of the campaign, the CPSNS has released information on the following topics:

- **Opioid Treatment Agreements**

Physicians and patients are encouraged to enter into formal, written opioid treatment agreements when the medications prescribed are for the treatment of chronic pain. The NSPMP can assist physicians by monitoring the opioid treatment agreements. On a weekly basis, the Program will monitor a patient’s profile to ensure adherence to the agreement. Any patient found to be in breach of the agreement will have their profile faxed to the physician.

- **One Month Day Supplies**

A recently released newspaper advertisement titled “Why only one month” emphasizes the benefits of shorter opioid refills (one month supplies) when treating chronic non-cancer pain.

To obtain further information on the Good Pill, Bad Pill campaign, please refer to the following link on the CPSNS website: <http://www.cpsns.ns.ca/agreement.aspx>

eAccess

In an effort to provide physicians, dentists and pharmacists with enhanced access to patient profiles, the Nova Scotia Prescription Monitoring Program (NSPMP) launched eAccess on April 1, 2012. This new service allows prescribers and pharmacists the ability to log on to a secure website and obtain a patient profile either during or outside of the NSPMP’s business hours. This will provide prescribers and pharmacists with access to information they need, when they need it, to determine the best treatment for their patient while promoting the appropriate use and the reduction of abuse and misuse of these monitored drugs.

To date, over 1500 prescribers and pharmacists have registered for eAccess. Between April 1, 2012 and June 30, 2012, a total of 979 patient profiles were generated through eAccess. The NSPMP believes this service is a very valuable tool for prescribers and pharmacists and would encourage you to register for and utilize eAccess.



To register prescribers and pharmacists will require a username and password. In order to receive this information, providers will be required to complete an eAccess Registration form and sign a User Agreement form. Both of these forms are available on the NSPMP website or by calling PMP at either 902-496-7123 or toll free 1-877-476-7767. The username and password will be emailed to the registrant via two separate emails so a secure email address is mandatory.