



Warning – Community Pharmacists can no longer dispense on a Digital Image of a Paper Prescription

Dear Prescriber

COVID-19 emergency measures that previously enabled community pharmacists to dispense medicines when provided with an image of a paper prescription via email, fax or SMS ('image-based prescribing') have **ceased**.

Prescribers are advised not to email, fax or SMS images of a paper prescriptions to community pharmacies on the assumption that their patient will be able to receive their medicines. Neither Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme funding or Victorian drugs and poisons legislation continue to allow such an arrangement.

It is recommended prescribers utilise electronic prescribing software that can be used to issue prescriptions for all types of scheduled medicines, including Schedule 8 medicines. Electronic prescriptions are fully paperless and do not require any hand written component. More information about electronic prescribing can be found here:
<https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/healthcare-providers/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescribing>

Most software used in General Practice now enables electronic prescriptions to be issued. Prescribers are encouraged to contact their prescribing software provider for more information.

In an emergency a prescriber may issue a verbal instruction to a pharmacist to dispense a Schedule 4 or Schedule 8 medicine for their patient. Prescribers must, as soon as practical, provide written confirmation of the verbal instruction. A paper prescription can be used for this purpose. (*Regulation 25 of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulation 2017*).

Please note: A temporary exemption remains allowing approved hospital authorities (hospital pharmacies) to dispense medicines on a digital image of a paper prescription.

Further information can be located via the Medicines and Poisons Regulation, Department of Health website:

Recent Updates: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/drugs-and-poisons/recent-updates>