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# Prescription Copies: Pharmacist Obligations & Considerations

**LEGISLATION** - A patient is entitled to a prescription copy, a right that is enshrined in both the Federal *Food and Drug Act* (FDA) and the Provincial *Pharmaceutical Act* (PhA). If a patient asks a pharmacist to obtain a copy of a prescription from another pharmacy, the pharmacist requesting the copy is acting as an agent of the patient when making that request. Refusal of the request for the copy is not in compliance with either Act. *The Personal Health Information Act* (PHIA) empowers, rather than blocks, the transfer of prescription copies.

**DOCUMENTATION** - The transfer of the prescription copy may be done verbally, by fax, or with a written copy. When a copy is transferred verbally, confirmation of the information by fax is a useful safety tool.

- The information required on the prescription copy includes: patient name and address, drug and strength, drug quantity, directions, name, address and telephone number of the prescriber, original date the prescription was filled, number of refills remaining, date of the last renewal, pharmacy name and address, prescription number/transaction number, the name of the pharmacist providing the copy and the name of the pharmacist obtaining the copy.
- The pharmacist making the transfer needs to document on either the patient profile or on the original prescription; the date of transfer, the pharmacy who received the transfer, and the name of the pharmacist receiving the copy.

**DELEGATION** - *The Pharmaceutical Act* describes the tasks a pharmacist may “delegate to a person other than a licensed pharmacist.” The transfer of prescription copies is not listed as one of the tasks that may be done by someone other than a pharmacist.

**ELIGIBLE DRUGS** - Drugs that may be transferred include all drugs that are Schedule F of the Regulations to *The Food and Drug Act*, and Targeted Substances and Benzodiazepines.

- Once a Schedule F prescription has been transferred to another pharmacy, the prescription at the transferring pharmacy is no longer valid and cannot be filled further. Should the patient want to return to the originating pharmacy, the prescription would need to be transferred back.

- Benzodiazepines and Targeted Substances may only be transferred once. The transferring pharmacy cannot fill the prescription any further and, unlike schedule F drugs, it cannot be transferred back to the originating pharmacy should the patient want to return to that pharmacy.
- Narcotic and Controlled drugs prescriptions can not be transferred.

**ETHICS** - In the transferring of a prescription copy, a balance of due diligence and professional courtesy is required by both the transferring pharmacist and the requesting pharmacist. PHIA allows the transferring pharmacist to convey information in addition to the information on the prescription including information about the individual's health, health care history and personal health information number. The Code of Ethics obliges both pharmacists to conduct themselves in a professional manner conducive to safe and effective health care.

Once a patient clearly provides authorization for the transfer of their prescription, the pharmacist at the transferring pharmacy should not be contacting the patient with the intent of changing his or her mind regarding the transfer. PHIA empowers the use of personal health information in a trustee's file for health care use only. If a pharmacist from the transferring pharmacy does contact the patient, the pharmacist should be prepared to demonstrate the reason for contact was in support of enhancing care and not for commercial interests of the pharmacy.

## REFERENCES

- Section 63(3) of *The Pharmaceutical Act*: Requirement to provide a copy
- Section 21 of the *Pharmaceutical Regulations*: Information content required for a copy
- Section C.01.041.2 to C.01.041.4, Part C, Division I of the *Food and Drug Regulations*: Requirements of a copy
- Section 17(3) of the *Pharmaceutical Regulations*: Tasks that may be delegated
- Section 22 of *The Personal Health Information Act*: Permission to disclose PHI Definition of Personal Health Information in *The Personal Health Information Act*
- Section 21 of *The Personal Health Information Act*: Restrictions on the use of PHI