

Memorandum

To: NSHA: Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, Health Service Managers, Clinical Nurse Educators, Registered Nurses, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Pharmacists

From: NSHA Pharmacy Department

Date: April 21, 2020

Subject: Prescribing Discharge Medications during COVID19

Community pharmacies across Canada are currently processing extremely high prescription volumes. Wait times are longer than normal. Most pharmacies are operating with reduced staff and hours of operation.

To mitigate the risk of drug shortages, the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists has directed pharmacists to only dispense a 30-day supply of medication unless, in the pharmacist's professional judgment, a longer day supply is appropriate.

NSHA Pharmacy recommends the following process to ensure successful discharge:

- Plan ahead for discharges as much as possible. Community Pharmacy turnaround time may be **up to 48 hours**.
 - **For patients requiring urgent medications**, please discuss directly with the patient's pharmacy. Pharmacies will make all reasonable efforts fulfill prescriptions in a timely nature, but expect some delays.
- Fax all discharge prescriptions to community pharmacies.
 - Do **NOT** give the patient the original copy.
 - Contact information for all pharmacies in Nova Scotia, including fax numbers, can be found at: <https://pans.ns.ca/public/you-your-pharmacist/pharmacy-finder>
 - Contact the pharmacy to confirm receipt of prescriptions.
 - Please provide the pharmacy with a contact number for the nursing unit should problems arise.
- Confirm required medications are in stock; especially high cost or specialty items (e.g. dalteparin prefilled syringes).
- Instruct the patient (or their agent) **NOT** to go directly to their pharmacy. They must contact their pharmacy to determine the pick-up time.
 - **Note:** many pharmacies are accommodating delivery of prescriptions.

- Consider e-prescribing using the NS Drug Information System (DIS) as an alternative to faxing discharge prescriptions.
 - Inform the patient that you have e-prescribed. They should contact their pharmacy to discuss pick-up or delivery options.
- Complete all NS Pharmacare requests and confirm approval for any Exception Status drugs prior to discharge.
 - Common medications requiring approval include direct acting oral anticoagulants (e.g., Apixaban, Rivaroxaban) and most oral anti-hyperglycemic agents (excluding metformin and gliclazide/glyburide).
 - The NS Pharmacare Exception Status Drug program website is located here: <https://novascotia.ca/dhw/pharmacare/exception-status-drugs.asp>
 - NS Pharmacare can be reached by calling 1-800-305-5026.
 - NS Pharmacare is accepting verbal requests FROM PRESCRIBERS for exception status medications.
 - NS Pharmacare is approving requests for DOACs due to inability for patients to access timely INR monitoring.
- Plan ahead if compliance packaging (e.g., blister packs) is required.
 - May take additional time to prepare (up to **72 hours**).
- **Please take care** to correctly indicate medications that have been started, stopped, OR changed during admission.
 - A new prescription is required for change in dose, frequency, formulation or duration.
 - Nova Scotia pharmacy law requires that the indication be documented for all medications. Including the indication on discharge prescriptions is encouraged and appreciated by community pharmacists.

Narcotics and Controlled Medications

- **Many requirements for narcotics and controlled drugs are currently suspended.**
- Until further notice:
 - NS Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) Duplicates are NOT required, though still can be used.
 - Faxed prescriptions for narcotics and controlled medications are acceptable.
 - Verbal orders can be given to community pharmacists for narcotics or controlled medications.
- Consider e-prescribing using the NS DIS

https://www.nspharmacists.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Notice_EmergencyProtocol_PrescribingCDSADrugs_NSPMPChanges_FaxPolicy.pdf

Please contact your local hospital pharmacy department if you have questions.