

Background

This guidance has been produced by the Pharmacy Forum NI for the information of all pharmacists in Northern Ireland.

On the 31 March 2014 there were some changes made to the requirements of prescriptions that can be dispensed from EEA States¹ and Switzerland (henceforth included with EEA State) in the United Kingdom (UK). The legislation allows prescriptions written by a doctor, dentist, prescribing nurse or a prescribing pharmacist from another EEA State to be dispensed in the UK. The changes are particularly relevant to Northern Ireland as prescriptions from the Republic of Ireland are covered under this legislation. In addition pharmacists can, where appropriate, make emergency supplies.

A pharmacist must *exercise professional judgement and take reasonable steps* to ensure the health professional is competent to prescribe each medicine on the prescription. Although it is not always possible to check the registration of the prescriber as there is no database of all EEA healthcare professionals; a pharmacist can try and check as appropriate with relevant EEA authorities, contact details for these can be found on the regulated profession database on the European Commission website and also on the [Pharmacy Forum NI](#) useful links page:

[Link to European Commission Website](#)

If a pharmacist is unable to confirm the registration status of an EEA healthcare professional the pharmacist may still be able to dispense the prescription. The pharmacist must ensure that they keep a record of the details of the interaction including all 'due diligence' as ultimately this could be decided by a court.

Prescription Requirements

- Details about the prescribed product, including where applicable the;
 - common name of the product
 - brand name if –
 - the prescribed product is a biological medicinal product, or
 - the prescribing EEA health professional deems it medically necessary for that product to be dispensed and the reasons justifying the use of the branded product
 - pharmaceutical formulation
 - quantity
 - strength of the medicinal product
 - dosage regimen

¹ List of EEA States included under The Human Medicines (Amendments) Regulations 2014
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

- The prescription must be signed by a doctor, dentist, prescribing nurse or prescribing pharmacist registered in an EEA State and the prescriber must be practising in the relevant EEA State.
- The prescription must have the signature of the prescribing EEA doctor, dentist; prescribing nurse or prescribing pharmacist.
- The prescription must have the patient's first full names, surname and their date of birth.
- The prescriber's details must include their first full name, surname, work address including the relevant member State in which the EEA health professional works, professional qualifications, direct contact details including email address and telephone or fax number (with international prefix).
- The issue date of the prescription.
 - The prescription is valid for 6 months from the date of issue on the prescription (unless for a Schedule 4 CD, which is valid for 28 days).

What cannot be prescribed?

A pharmacist cannot dispense a prescription for schedule 1, 2 and 3 Controlled Drugs. A pharmacist can also not dispense a medicine which does not have a marketing authorisation in the UK. If the prescriber has written a prescription for a named branded product, a pharmacist may only dispense the brand named on the prescription – a pharmacist may **not** dispense a UK equivalent.

Emergency supply

A pharmacist is able to make an emergency supply at the request of a doctor, dentist, prescribing nurse or a prescribing pharmacist from another EEA State. A pharmacist must follow the standard process for dealing with emergency supplies; a pharmacist may also issue an emergency supply at the request of a patient. An EEA prescriber must supply a prescription within 72 hours if they have requested the emergency supply.

Charging for prescription

The EEA prescription will not be an NHS prescription, so it should be treated in the same way as a UK issued private prescription, a record equivalent to those taken for a private prescription should be kept by the pharmacist. The charge levied to the patient is a matter for the individual pharmacist.

Not dispensing a prescription

If a pharmacist chooses not to dispense a prescription they should, as a matter of good practice, record the reason for not doing so. A pharmacist may decide not to dispense a prescription if they feel that the prescription is not clinically appropriate for the individual or if they are not satisfied it is legally valid. In this instance referring the individual to a UK doctor or dentist could be an appropriate alternative.

More Information

View the legislation: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2014/490/regulation/6/made