

## Communiqué

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**13 June 2014**

The Pharmacy Board of Australia (the Board) met on 23 May 2014 at the national office of the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) in Melbourne.

### Public consultation on registration standards and guidelines closes 30 June 2014

The Board is currently consulting on the following revised registration standards and guidelines:

- Professional indemnity insurance registration standard
- Continuing professional development registration standard and related guidelines
- Recency of practice registration standard and related guideline
- Supervised practice arrangements
- Examinations for eligibility for general registration

The Board is also consulting on *Guidelines for compounding of medicines* for pharmacists and a draft *Professional practice profile for pharmacists undertaking complex compounding*.

The consultation papers are published under [Current consultations](#) on the Board's website.

The consultation process to date has included research and preliminary consultation with stakeholders prior to finalisation of the drafts for public consultation.

Consultation will close on 30 June 2014 and the community, stakeholders, pharmacists and other health practitioners are welcome to make a submission.

### Advertising guidelines have been updated to make them clearer

National Boards have acted on the feedback they received about the [Guidelines for advertising regulated health services](#) (*Advertising guidelines*) that were released in March and have today published an update.

Anyone who advertises a regulated health service must meet the requirements of the National Law. This includes registered health practitioners, individuals who are not health practitioners and businesses.

No requirements have been added from the previous version, and the update comes in to effect today.

The updated *Advertising guidelines* were edited to make them clearer, particularly regarding:

that under the National Law, testimonials are not allowed when advertising a regulated health service the obligations of the National Law about advertising only apply when a regulated health service is being advertised, and the National Law is not intended to stop members of the community and patients from discussing their experiences online or in person.

Further information can be accessed on the Board's [website](#).

### **Ministers announce the review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme**

Australia's health ministers have announced the terms of reference for the scheduled review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). The review – to be led by independent reviewer, Mr Kim Snowball – was built into the intergovernmental agreement that set up the framework and governance arrangements for the National Scheme. The agreement stated that the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) will initiate an independent review after three years of the National Scheme's operation.

The terms of reference for the review are published at [Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council website](#) under 'media releases' on the right-hand tab.

The independent reviewer, Mr Snowball, has held a variety of senior leadership roles in both the public and private health sectors. He was previously the Director General of WA Health and has also served as the Chair of the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (AHMAC).

The Board will be participating actively in the review process and will keep stakeholders informed of opportunities to provide comment and consultation timelines

### **Methotrexate incidents**

The Notifications Committee of the Pharmacy Board of Australia has in recent months received notifications of several medication incidents involving the drug methotrexate resulting in the deaths of the patients. In all cases, while the medication was dispensed correctly, the resultant packaging of the drug into dose administration aids such as Webster packs was incorrect and the packing was not detected by the releasing pharmacist.

The following description is a distillation of the incidents and encapsulates the processes carried out that led to the fatal incidents.

The prescription for methotrexate was correctly dispensed by a pharmacist for packaging into a dose administration aid (DAA) for use by the patient. The drug was prescribed as part of the patient's treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, with directions to be taken once a week on the same day each week. The setting out of the patient's medication into a DAA was carried out by a pharmacy technician, who incorrectly packed the methotrexate to be taken every day. This incorrect packing was done for two separate weekly packs.

The two packs were checked by two different pharmacists on consecutive weeks who both released the packs for the patient to use, and placed their initials on the packs as having been checked as correct.

The contents of the two Webster packs were consumed by the patient for a total of nine days, by which time the patient had developed mouth ulceration which prevented the patient from eating properly and led to a hospital admission, where the packing error was detected by admitting hospital staff.

The patient's condition deteriorated rapidly and the patient died some days later in hospital. The death was referred to the Coroner's Office. The Coroner subsequently found that the cause of death was immune system compromise caused by the toxic effects of methotrexate dispensed and incorrectly packed by the pharmacists as daily instead of once weekly doses.

The Committee found that the pharmacists' professional performance was unsatisfactory, and referred the matters for hearing by a Professional Performance Standards Panel.

This case underscores the Board's concern when pharmacists dispense and subsequently pack into a DAA for later consumption by the patient, of drugs with a narrow therapeutic index. Extra vigilance is required to be exercised by pharmacists with these drugs.

### **Follow @AHPRA on Twitter**

As part of listening and responding to community queries and discussion, you can now find AHPRA on Twitter at [@AHPRA](#),

AHPRA will regularly host twitter chats about important topics, and will use this forum to try and get more feedback to National Board consultations.

### **Further information**

Further information about the Board can be found on the [Board's website](#) and practitioners are encouraged to refer to the site for news and updates on policies and guidelines affecting their profession.

Stephen Marty

Chair

13 June 2014