



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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Oifig Náisiúnta na gConarthaí,  
Páirc Oifigí Bhaile Marlainn,  
An Mhuileann gCearr,  
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Ref: S0222-NCO-09  
Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 2009

**Re: Alignment of Community Drug Schemes to incorporate Nurse and Midwife Prescriptions**

Dear Pharmacist,

You will be aware that some nurses and midwives are now authorised to prescribe medicinal products. The Irish Medicines Board (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 provided for amendment to the definition of practitioner for the purposes of nurse and midwife prescribing. The legislation allows registered nurses or midwives who have: (1) completed an approved education programme; (2) appropriate clinical experience; (3) registered with An Bord Altranais (Irish Nursing Board) as a Registered Nurse Prescriber (RNP); (4) authority from the health service provider who employs them to prescribe a range of medications within their scope of practice.

The introduction of nurse and midwife prescribing does not affect materially the current arrangements for reimbursement under the various Community Drug Schemes. The *Unified Prescription Claim Form* should be completed in the usual manner.

To align the Schemes to incorporate prescriptions generated by RNPs the following arrangements will apply -

- **General Medical Services Scheme (GMS).** The policy decision is that community RNPs will be issued with a pad of standard prescription forms with their own allocated GMS number. This number will be allocated once the Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS) has been notified that the RNP is authorised by the HSE to commence prescribing. These arrangements are under development and a further circular will issue to you, in due course, regarding the details and commencement date.

However an RNP can prescribe for medical card patients under the Hospital Emergency Arrangements and the High Tech Drugs Scheme from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2009.

- Dispensing of **Emergency Supplies on a Hospital Prescription Form for a Medical Card (GMS) Patient**. The current arrangements are extended to include a prescription written by a RNP. It is important to be aware that the existing arrangements pertain i.e.

*“... for persons who have been in-patients of Acute General Hospitals or who have attended the Accident and Emergency Departments of General Hospitals and when, because of the circumstances of their discharge and/or the urgency of the prescribed medication, it is not possible or very convenient for such persons to attend their general practitioners to have the hospital prescription items transcribed to GMS prescription forms. Out-Patient Department (OPD) prescriptions are not covered by these arrangements.”*

You are reminded, *“...dispensing of emergency supplies shall be on the day of issue of a hospital prescription – in special circumstances an emergency supply may be dispensed on the following day.”*

Please see page 62 of the *Information and Administrative Arrangements for Pharmacists* accessible on the HSE website at:

[http://www.hse.ie/eng/PCRS/Contractor\\_Handbooks/PCRS\\_Handbook\\_for\\_Pharmacists.pdf](http://www.hse.ie/eng/PCRS/Contractor_Handbooks/PCRS_Handbook_for_Pharmacists.pdf)

- Supply of **High Tech Drugs (HTD)**. The current arrangements are extended to include a prescription written by a RNP. The prescription will be written on the *High Technology Medicines Hospital Prescription Form*. The relevant RNP will enter their details in the space allocated for the doctor's details and signature (this form will be amended to incorporate RNPs in the future). RNPs are not authorised to initiate High Tech drug therapies. However, in issuing a maintenance prescription, they are permitted to make dosage changes for therapies already initiated by a consultant.
- **Drugs Payment Scheme (DPS)**. The current arrangements are extended to include a prescription written by a RNP. Pharmacists are reminded that the *Protocol for the Supply of Unauthorised Medicinal Products Under the Scheme* will not apply to RNPs, as they are not authorised to prescribe unlicensed medicines.
- **Long Term Illness Scheme (LTI)**. The current arrangements are extended to include a prescription written by a RNP. Pharmacists are reminded that *Drugs, Medicines and Non Drug Items reimbursable under the LTI Scheme are intended for the treatment of the primary condition and are approved by the Local Health Office in which the eligible person resides*. As with the DPS, RNPs are not authorised to prescribe unlicensed medicines.
- **Health (Amendment) Act 1996 (HAA)**. The current arrangements are extended to include a prescription written by a RNP. As with the DPS, RNPs are not authorised to prescribe unlicensed medicines.

Prescriptions generated by RNPs will be identifiable to you through the inclusion on each prescription of their individual Professional Identification Number (PIN) under which they

are registered with An Bord Altranais. The RNP will sign the prescription using his/her *First Name* and *Last Name* along with acronym RNP and the signatory's PIN number. You may confirm that a nurse or midwife is a RNP by checking the nurses register maintained by An Bord Altranais on the "nursingboard.ie" website accessible at [www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie)

Your attention is drawn to the particular restrictions on RNPs prescribing controlled drugs (Schedule 2 and 3), details of which are set out in the Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Regulations 2007 and can be accessed on the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland Website, at "pharmaceuticalsociety.ie". It should be noted that RNPs are not authorised to prescribe Methadone.

**Yours sincerely,**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pat O'Dowd', written over a horizontal line.

**Pat O'Dowd**  
**Asst National Director (Contracts)**