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ENSURING SAFE ACCESS TO M3P PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PATIENTS DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba (CPSM) and the College of Pharmacists of Manitoba (CPhM) have received several inquiries regarding measures to ensure safe patient access to Manitoba Prescribing Practices Program (M3P) drugs during the COVID-19 outbreak. Several registrants have also voiced their concern about maintaining safe prescribing practices while implementing social distancing where possible.

Inquiries have also been received from prescribers regarding the appropriateness of virtual and phone visits for patients who require a M3P prescription.

In response to these inquiries, the CPSM and CPhM are providing the following guidance when it comes to drugs that require an M3P form.

Virtual and phone visits (for prescribers only):

- Where appropriate and acceptable to the patient, a virtual or phone visit can replace an in-person patient visit to refill or adjust prescriptions for opioids and other drugs that require a M3P prescription. Follow-up phone calls can also be useful as “tolerance checks” when opioid doses are increased.
- This may be especially important for those patients who may be at higher risk due to age or pre-existing health conditions if they were to be inadvertently exposed to COVID-19.
- Choose the most secure method of telemedicine, such as landline telephones or Manitoba telehealth services, rather than email, Skype, or Facetime.
- Ensure that you inform patients of privacy risks and obtain patient consent before providing health services using digital technology.
- Providing new prescriptions for drugs that require a M3P form usually requires an in-person visit to conduct an assessment and physical examination. During these unprecedented times, physicians are required to use their professional judgement in determining if a new M3P prescription can be provided relying on virtual technology or a phone call instead of an in-person visit.

M3P Prescriptions:

- Effective immediately and temporarily during the pandemic, M3P prescriptions can be faxed directly to the pharmacy of the patient’s choice. This may be especially useful for patients who are assessed via virtual or phone appointments and require refills or dose adjustments to existing M3P prescriptions. New prescriptions for M3P drugs may also be faxed to pharmacies to reduce the need for patients to attend pharmacies in person simply to “drop off” a M3P prescription.
- **Faxed M3P prescriptions MUST meet the requirements outlined in the Joint Statement: Facsimile Transmission of Prescriptions which can be found here: <https://cphm.ca/uploaded/web/Legislation/Facsimile%20Transmission%20of%20Prescription%20July%202022%202016.pdf>.** This Joint Statement clearly describes the shared responsibility

between the prescriber and pharmacist to ensure the confidentiality, authenticity, clarity and enhanced communication between parties for all faxed prescriptions.

- When faxing a M3P prescription, providers may use the attached template (See Appendix A). This template indicates all the required information that needs to be completed prior to faxing a prescription. Securely tape the original M3P form in the blank space as indicated, fill out all required fields on the rest of the form **and write the dose in numbers and words in the box provided beneath the taped M3P form**. This second notation of the dose in numbers and words is required to ensure dosing accuracy, as faxed prescriptions often arrive at the pharmacy with fax artifacts obscuring handwriting. The pharmacist thus has a second opportunity to verify the dose.
- The original M3P prescription does **NOT** need to be mailed or couriered to the pharmacy. Once successfully faxed, the original M3P prescription essentially becomes a “copy” and should be stamped or labelled as such before added to a paper chart or scanned into an electronic medical record. The faxed M3P prescription that the pharmacy received is now regarded as the original, valid M3P prescription.
 - **Do not provide the original M3P prescription to the patient to take to the pharmacy if it has been faxed. This prevents the patient from potentially taking the original M3P prescription to a second pharmacy other than the intended pharmacy.**
- Use your normal clinic or hospital fax cover sheet and address it to the intended pharmacy.
- Call the pharmacy to indicate that you are faxing an M3P and to confirm that the pharmacy has received the fax. This document may be provided to the pharmacist to ensure there are no delays in dispensing the M3P prescription.
- Providers are strongly encouraged to add cell or pager numbers to these templates to ensure that pharmacists can promptly reach the prescriber if clarification is needed regarding a faxed M3P prescription. This will prevent a potential delay in dispensing M3P drugs needed by patients.
- Providers must complete all fields of the M3P form as usual before faxing it.

Please note that at this time, the following are still **not** permitted:

- Verbal orders for any drugs requiring an M3P form.
- M3P prescription extensions by pharmacists without a valid M3P from a licensed prescriber.
- Transfers of M3P prescriptions between pharmacies.

The Colleges are awaiting further information from Health Canada and Manitoba Health regarding these possibilities.