

NECS supports the NHS England Area Team Controlled Drugs Accountable Officer in ensuring the safe management and use of controlled drugs within the North East & Cumbria region. Based on the commonly reported incidents and the lessons learned, we aim to share good practice across the region

Prescription Security

Theft of prescription forms and their misuse is an area of concern. A prescription form is an NHS asset that has a financial cost attached and should be treated as a 'blank cheque' with a high street value. The introduction of the electronic prescription service (EPS), will make it more difficult for people to alter legitimate prescriptions, however prescription forms are still a target for fraud and theft.

Security issues for prescribers

- ◆ Be mindful of the potential dangers associated with carrying around prescription forms or leaving them unattended
- ◆ Patients, temporary staff and visitors should never be left alone with prescription forms
- ◆ Only a small number of prescription forms should be taken on home visits – ideally between 6 and 10 – to minimise potential loss
- ◆ Keep prescriptions out of sight when not in use and do not leave any in vehicles overnight
- ◆ Blank prescriptions should never be pre-signed, and blank or signed prescription forms should never be left at patients' homes, care homes or community pharmacies for GP or locum visits.

What do the prescription codes mean?

The codes printed on the prescription can tell you whether the form is from a pad (for hand written scripts), or from a form intended for use with the computer system:

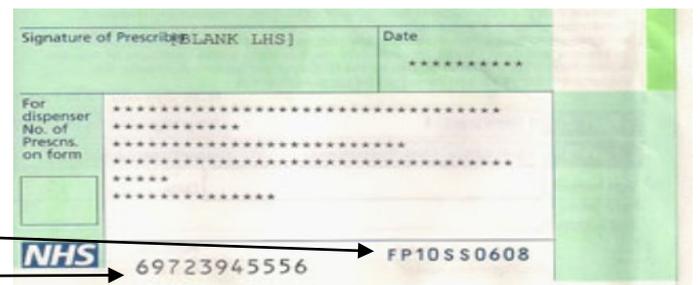
- ◆ Hand written prescriptions for GPs have a **FP10NC** code, nurses use **FP10P**
- ◆ Computer generated prescriptions for nurses and GPs use **FP10SS**

If you see a hand written script with the SS code (computer generated) it is likely to be a forgery

This is the prescription origin code
This is the serial number of the prescription

Security Issues for Practices

- ◆ Designate a member of staff to accept overall responsibility for prescription forms
- ◆ Check deliveries of forms whilst the delivery driver is present: check the amount and that packaging is sealed and unbroken. Report and investigate irregularities immediately with the area team/supplier
- ◆ Transfer prescription from stock to secure storage immediately
- ◆ Record the first and last serial numbers of prescription forms received and issued. Recording sheets can be found here: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Documents/>
- ◆ Encourage prescribers to use in number sequence order to aid tracking of usage
- ◆ Prescription forms which are no longer required should be securely destroyed, e.g. by shredding, before putting into confidential waste and record the destruction - recording forms are available from the Medicines Optimisation Team



If you encounter prescription theft or forgery:

Contact the police. The police must be informed: **tel: 101**

Inform NHS England so that an alert can be circulated, as the patient may continue to obtain and present fraudulent prescriptions: **email: england.pharmacyandoptometry@nhs.net**

Forged prescriptions: community pharmacies

If you see a hand written script with the SS code (computer generated code) e.g. it is likely to be a forgery



What to do if you come across a forged prescription

- ◆ **Contact the prescriber/surgery to check the authenticity of the prescription** If this isn't practical and a forgery or fraudulent act is suspected, the police must be contacted **tel: 101**
- ◆ **Contact the police** The police must be informed if a fraudulent prescription is identified **tel: 101**
- ◆ **Is CCTV footage available?** This should be quarantined as it may be required as evidence by the police
- ◆ **Record a description of the individual(s)** This will be helpful to the police and is best recorded as soon as possible after the incident
- ◆ **Retain the prescription** It should be stored securely as evidence (e.g. in an envelope) to restrict handling (as fingerprints may subsequently need to be removed from the prescription). If the patient refuses to leave the prescription within the pharmacy, make a copy or record prescription details as this will help the police investigation.
- ◆ **Once you have contacted the police, record the Force Wide Incident Number (FWIN)** The police will supply a FWIN number and this contributes to a robust audit trail. This may be required by the NHS Counter Fraud Service if claiming a "Pharmacy Reward"
- ◆ **Inform the Accountable Officer by contacting the NECS Medicines Optimisation CD Team.** A CD occurrence report will be made. See below for the team contact details.
- ◆ **Inform NHS England** so that an alert can be circulated, as the patient may continue to present fraudulent prescriptions at other pharmacies. Patient details and description can be given to NHS England for the alert. **email: england.pharmacyandoptometry@nhs.net**

Further information

NHS Protect Aide Memoires for Practices and Prescribers, and Advice for Community Pharmacies can be found on the **NECS Medicines Optimisation website**: <http://medicines.necsu.nhs.uk/controlled-drugs/>

NHS Protect Guidance: Security of Prescription Forms; Tackling Fraud and Managing Security can be found here: <http://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/Documents/>

Future articles / contact us:

If you need advice, or have an idea for an article to be included in a future issue, please contact one of the Controlled Drugs Team Senior Medicines Optimisation Technicians or the CD Liaison Officer:

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