Prescription And Prescription Handling

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Definition of Prescription

- A prescription is a legal, written (or electronic) instruction from a registered medical practitioner (RMP) or other authorized prescriber to a pharmacist for the preparation, dispensing, and administration of a drug or treatment to a specific patient.
- **Key Points:**
  - It authorizes the supply of a medication and includes essential patient-specific directions.
  - A prescription can be manual (handwritten) or digital (e-prescription).
  - In legal terms, it serves as both a clinical order and a medical record.

Parts of a Prescription

A standard prescription is made up of several essential components:

Section	Description
1. Date	The date on which the prescription is issued. Essential for record-keeping and assessing validity.
2. Superscription (℞)	Latin term “Recipe” meaning “take thou”. It symbolizes the start of the prescription.
3. Inscription	Contains the **name and strength** of the drug and its **dosage form** (e.g., tablet, suspension).
4. Subscription	The pharmacist’s instructions for **compounding/dispensing** (mostly applicable to extemporaneous preparations).
5. Signatura (Sig.)	Directions for the patient—includes dose, route, frequency, duration, and any special instructions.
6. Prescriber’s Details	Name, qualifications, registration number, address, and signature of the prescriber (essential for legal and identification purposes).
7. Patient’s Details	Name, age, sex, weight (especially for pediatric dosing), address, and sometimes diagnosis.
8. Refill Information	Specifies the number of times the prescription can be refilled (if any).

Legality of Prescriptions

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- A prescription is a legal document, and its legality is governed by national laws and regulations (e.g., Drugs and Cosmetics Act in India, FDA laws in the US).
- **Legal Requirements:**
  - Must be issued by a licensed prescriber (doctor, dentist, veterinarian, etc.).
  - Must include legible handwriting (or digital print), proper drug nomenclature, and dosage.
  - Should contain complete patient information.
  - Must not prescribe controlled substances without proper authorization and documentation.
  - Tampering, forgery, or unauthorized alterations are punishable by law.
  - Schedule X, H, H1, and Narcotic Drugs require additional documentation and retention.

Prescription Handling

- Pharmacists must follow systematic and ethical procedures to handle prescriptions:

Steps in Handling a Prescription:

1. Receiving the Prescription

- Accept only valid and legible prescriptions.
- Confirm identity of the patient or caregiver.
- For e-prescriptions, ensure secure access and authenticity.

2. Reading and Interpreting

- Carefully interpret the drug name, strength, dosage, and route.
- Be alert for **unusual dosages**, abbreviations, or ambiguous instructions.
- Verify prescriber’s credentials.

3. Clinical Check

- Check for **drug-drug interactions**, **allergies**, or **contraindications**.
- Evaluate **duplicate therapy** or inappropriate medication.

4. Data Entry and Record Maintenance

- Enter all prescription data in the **dispensing software or manual register**.
- Update patient medication history.

5. Dispensing and Labelling

- Select correct medication and **dispense as per dosage form and strength**.

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- **Label the medicine container** clearly with appropriate details.

6. Counseling and Patient Education

- Explain the dose, timing, route, side effects, storage, and precautions.
- Answer patient queries and reinforce understanding.

7. Documentation and Filing

- Retain a copy for legal records.
- For **narcotics or psychotropic drugs**, ensure record-keeping as per regulatory laws.

Labelling of Dispensed Medications

- Labelling is a critical part of safe medication use. It helps ensure the patient uses the medication correctly and safely.

Main Label (Primary Label)

- This is the official label affixed to the medicine container by the pharmacist.
- **Must Include:**
  - Name of the patient
  - Name and address of pharmacy
  - Date of dispensing
  - Name and strength of the drug
  - Dosage form and quantity
  - Directions for use (Sig.)
  - Batch number and expiry date (optional but advisable)
  - Storage instructions
  - Cautionary statements, if required
  - Schedule warning (e.g., "Schedule H drug – To be sold by retail on the prescription of a Registered Medical Practitioner only")

Ancillary Labels

- These are supplementary labels used to convey specific warnings or instructions that may not fit on the main label.
- **Common Examples:**
  - “Take on an empty stomach”

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- “May cause drowsiness. Avoid driving.”
- “Shake well before use”
- “Keep in a cool, dry place”
- “Avoid alcohol while taking this medicine”
- “Do not take with dairy products”

- Ancillary labels improve adherence and safety, especially for chronic or high-risk medications.

Pictograms

- Pictograms are visual symbols or icons used on labels to help communicate important information to patients with low literacy or language barriers.
- **Common Pictograms:**
  - 🕐 Clock – “Take at specific time”
  - 💧 Dropper – “Eye/Ear drops”
  - 🚫🚗 Car – “Do not drive”
  - 🌞 Morning / 🌙 Night – “Morning/Night use”
  - 🚱 Glass of water with slash – “Do not take with water”
  - ❄️ Snowflake – “Refrigerate”
  - 🔒 Lock – “Keep out of reach of children”
- They are **especially helpful for pediatric, geriatric, and illiterate populations**.

Brief Instructions on Medication Usage

- Patients must be guided with clear instructions to ensure rational and safe use of medications.

Instructions Should Cover:

1. **Dosage**
   - Amount per dose (e.g., 500 mg)
   - Frequency (e.g., three times a day)
   - Duration (e.g., for 5 days)
2. **Route of Administration**
   - Oral, sublingual, intramuscular, intravenous, rectal, topical, etc.
3. **Time of Administration**

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- Before/after meals, morning/evening, bedtime

4. Special Precautions

- Alcohol restriction
- Food interactions
- Driving or machinery operation
- Sunlight exposure

5. Missed Dose Guidance

- “If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember unless it’s almost time for the next dose.”

6. What to Do in Case of Side Effects

- Watch for rashes, nausea, drowsiness, etc.
- When to contact the doctor/pharmacist

7. Storage Conditions

- Room temperature, refrigeration, away from sunlight

8. Disposal of Unused Medication

- Do not flush or throw in trash
- Return to pharmacy if possible

Dispensing Process

Definition:

- The dispensing process refers to the professional and legal procedure in which pharmacists interpret, prepare, package, label, and provide medicines based on a valid prescription, ensuring that patients receive the correct drug, in the correct dose, with appropriate instructions and counseling.

Step-by-Step Process of Dispensing:

A. Receiving the Prescription

- Check Legitimacy: Ensure the prescription is issued by an authorized prescriber (doctor, dentist, etc.).
- Verify Completeness: Confirm it includes the patient's name, age, date, prescriber's details, drug name, strength, dosage form, frequency, and duration.
- Understand the Intent: Comprehend the prescriber's therapeutic goal, diagnosis if known.

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