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MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

Notice for District of Columbia Pharmacy Staff

Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Updates on Recent Emergency Legislation

April 15, 2020

Background

On March 11, 2020, in response to the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), Mayor Bowser declared a Public Health Emergency, which was extended by Mayor's Order 2020-050, on March 20, 2020. On March 13, 2020, the Director of the District of Columbia Department of Health (DC Health), Dr. LaQuandra Nesbitt, issued Administrative Order No. 2020-02, which waived licensure requirements for Health Care Practitioners. Subsequently, the Council of the District of Columbia passed the COVID-19 Response Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 (A23-247), to assist District residents during the Public Health Emergency.

The Board of Pharmacy and DC Health's Pharmaceutical Control Division would like to provide the following information and guidance regarding compliance with District of Columbia Pharmacy Laws and regulations during the State of Emergency.

All Pharmacies Must

- Review or create interim emergency policies to anticipate and react to this emergency and disseminate these emergency policies to all staff. It is recommended pharmacies incorporate recommendations in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Interim Guidance for Employers and additional guidance and information for pharmacies concerning COVID-19 on the APHA and ASHP websites.
- Keep up to date with the state of conditions in the District of Columbia through https://coronavirus.dc.gov
- Consistently monitor the health of pharmacy staff. Any staff member exhibiting flu-like systems or respiratory illness should stay at home.
- Currently, all pharmacies should remain open if feasible. As the COVID-19 emergency evolves, pharmacists and pharmacies should continue to provide services in a manner that assures access and safety to both patients and staff.
- If your pharmacy plans to decrease operating hours or close for an extended period of time, please notify our office as required by 22-B DCMR 1906.5, by facsimile at (202) 442-4767.

Refills

The COVID-19 Response Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 (A23-247), Section 309 (Prescription drugs), allows pharmacists to authorize and dispense prescription medication refills early and refill medications without contacting the patient's physician during this public health emergency. The current public health emergency declaration will end on April 24, 2020, unless extended by legislation and a superseding Mayor's Order.

During this public health emergency, a pharmacist may authorize and dispense a **refill** of a non-controlled prescription medication up to a 90-day supply and may authorize and dispense a **refill** of a schedule III-V prescription medication for the same day supply as the original prescription, not to exceed a 30-day supply. The prohibition against refilling a schedule II prescription medication remains in place.

Licensure and Registration

Pursuant to the DC Health Director's Administrative Order No. 2020-02, dated March 13, 2020, Pharmacists, Pharmacy Interns, and Pharmacy Technicians who are actively licensed or registered and in good standing to practice in another state can practice in the District of Columbia, at a DC licensed facility, without a DC license during the public health emergency.

All licenses and registrations set to expire during the public health emergency shall be extended to the 45th day after the public health emergency is declared to be over, per the COVID-19 Response Emergency Amendment Act of 2020 (A23-247).

Sterile Compounding

Follow established, recognized guidelines (CDC, CDC on N95 Respirators, USP, FDA, or equivalent) for guidance on conserving garb and alternatives and strategies for managing potential extended use of face masks, gowns, and shoe covers. It is expected that all pharmacies will continue to follow protocols that prohibit the use of contaminated or unusable supplies.

Expectation of Continued Standard of Care

Any changes to pharmacy practice should be viewed as only short-term solutions to navigate the current public health emergency. All policies should return to normal practice when the public health emergency is declared over. This public health emergency is not an excuse to lower quality assurance standards, and DC Health and the Pharmaceutical Control Division expect all pharmacies and pharmacy personnel to uphold and follow best practices and policies which ensure utmost patient care and safety while aiding in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Remote Order Entry Waiver

If a pharmacy is experiencing staffing shortages and not able to complete data order entry, the Pharmaceutical Control Division is permitting remote order entry by licensed Pharmacists, Pharmacy Interns, and Registered Pharmacy Technicians. This remote order entry can be at another pharmacy or location as long as the computer software is compliant with all current HIPAA Laws and Regulations.

Remote Verification of Prescription Orders Waiver

If a pharmacy is experiencing staffing shortages and is not able to complete verification of prescription orders, the Pharmaceutical Control Division is permitting remote verifications of prescription orders by licensed Pharmacists. This remote order entry can be at another pharmacy or location as long as the computer software is compliant with all current HIPAA Laws and Regulations. This must be a two-step process in which the final product verification is completed at the pharmacy.

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Waiver of Requirements for Non-Resident Pharmacies and Non-Resident Distributor/Manufacturers

During the Public Health Crisis, the Pharmaceutical Control Division is waiving the licensure requirement for Pharmacies, Distributors and Manufacturers to operate in the District of Columbia. However, these facilities must be licensed and in good standing in their home state. This will remove barriers for pharmacies to receive medications needed and address any potential drug shortages. Pharmacies are still required to report the dispensing of all controlled substance medications, bultalbital, cyclobenzaprine, and gabapentin to the DC Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

Unexpected Closures

Pharmacies are reminded to follow the current regulations listed in 22-B DCMR 1906 for unexpected closures. Please fax all closure notices to (202)442-4767.

Please visit the DC Health and CDC websites regularly for the most current information.

For resources and additional information on the District of Columbia Government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit coronavirus.dc.gov.

Last Updated: April 10, 2020