

PHARMACY PRACTICE POLICY

Clarification of the Current Signature Criteria for a Valid Prescription

Revised April 2019

This document is intended to clarify the prescriber's signature requirements for a valid prescription when the prescription is generated using a prescriber's computer or other electronic writing device.

Pharmacists are responsible for the interpretation, evaluation and validation of each prescription they dispense (*Pharmacy Act* of NS section 32 (l) a).

1. A prescription generated via a prescriber's computer, EMR, or other electronic device and **physically given to a patient** for eventual processing at a pharmacy must comply with the federal regulations regarding prescriptions and must include a valid signature.
 - Rubber stamps, pre-signed forms or other electronic signatures which cannot be confirmed to be distinct for each transaction do not fulfill federal requirements. They do not provide confirmation to the pharmacist that the prescriber attests to the accuracy of the prescription document as a reflection of his intended order for that patient.
 - To ensure that the prescription document presented by the patient is the original copy of the order written by the prescriber, the signature must be original (**ie: pen on paper**). A pharmacist considering a prescription on which the signature was generated by a printer at the time of creation cannot confirm that this is the one and only copy of the order (as identical copies of the order could have been produced by photocopy). While a subsequent conversation with the prescriber can confirm the accuracy of the prescription for that patient, it does not confirm that it is the only copy of the prescription.
2. A prescription generated via a prescriber's computer, EMR, or other electronic device and **faxed directly to a pharmacy** for processing must contain a valid signature and must comply with the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists Fax Transmission of Prescriptions Policy.
 - Prescriptions signed at the time of prescribing and then transmitted by fax directly to a pharmacy are not considered in violation of Section C 0.1.041 (l) (a) of the Food and Drug Regulations.
 - Consistent with Health Canada's definition of sign¹, for prescriptions that are transmitted electronically (including by fax), pharmacists must be satisfied that the identified practitioner has ordered the prescription.

¹ Sign: whatever is determined to be necessary to authenticate and validate the order in that pharmacists must have a high degree of certainty that the identified practitioner (in the electronic message) has ordered the prescription. Health Canada Policy Statement of E-prescribing.