

Health and safety requirements

BY DR LAETITIA HATTINGH MPS

Various legislative provisions and common law principles specify the requirements that need to be followed to facilitate the health and safety within pharmacy workplaces. These provisions not only apply to safe systems of work within a pharmacy but also to the environments in which pharmacy staff carry out practices.

The practice of pharmacy often involves potentially hazardous activities such as:

- Working with heavy pharmacy stock
- Dispensing and compounding hazardous bioactive materials
- Preparing cytotoxic products.

Pharmacists therefore need to be aware of the obligations imposed on them as owners, employers and employees and also ensure that all pharmacy staff are aware of their obligations.

Work health and safety legislation

Individual states and territories have the responsibility for regulating workplace health and safety in the respective jurisdictions and there are Acts, regulations, codes, standards and guidelines in place in all of the jurisdictions. However, much has been done to harmonise the legislative provisions following a decision by the Council of Australian Governments in 2008.¹ The Model Work Health and

Safety Bill was drafted in 2010 with the involvement of all the states and territories and subsequently new Acts and regulations have been enacted in all of the jurisdictions except Western Australia and Victoria.

The legislative provisions in all of the jurisdictions are in the main similar and can be summarised as:

1. A requirement on a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), officers of companies, unincorporated associations, government departments, workers and employers to ensure their health and safety as far as reasonable practicable by eliminating risks. If this is not possible the risks must be minimised.
2. A requirement on the PCBU having to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of workers or others is not put at risk from work carried out as part of the conduct of the business or undertaking.
3. Workers having a duty to take reasonable care in relation to their own health and safety and the health and safety of others who may be adversely affected by the worker's acts or omissions.
4. Other persons in the workplace having a similar duty to that of workers and need to exercise reasonable care in relation to their own health and safety and the health and safety of others.

The duty of care regarding health and safety extends to the entire premises and any foreseeable risks to patients, visitors, or employees outside of the pharmacy also need to be addressed. For example: making sure that ramps and rails are safe to use and that there are no potholes.

Table 1. Occupation health and safety legislation and regulations.²

Commonwealth	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
ACT	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
NSW	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
NT	Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011
QLD	Work Health and Safety Act 2011 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
SA	Work Health and Safety Act 2012 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
Tas	Work Health and Safety Act 2012 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
Vic	Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007
WA	Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996

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Hazardous medicines

An area of pharmacy practice that is particularly relevant to work health and safety is the preparation and dispensing of hazardous medicines. Medicines are considered hazardous if they exhibit one or more of the following properties in humans or animals:³

- carcinogenicity
- teratogenicity or other developmental toxicity
- reproductive toxicity
- organ toxicity at low doses
- genotoxicity
- structure and toxicity profiles of new drugs that mimic existing drugs determined hazardous by the above criteria.

Hazardous medicines not only pose a risk to patients because of cell toxicity but they also have risks for health workers and the environment. It is therefore important to follow applicable practice standards when handling hazardous medicines. These include specific Australian Standards⁴ as well as professional practice standards. For example the standards developed by the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia⁵:

- *Standards of Practice for the Provision of Clinical Oncology Pharmacy Services*
- *Standards of Practice for the Safe Handling of Cytotoxic Drugs in Pharmacy Departments*
- *Standards of Practice for the Transportation of Cytotoxic Drugs from Pharmacy Departments*
- *Standards of Practice for the Provision of Oral Chemotherapy for the Treatment of Cancer.*

References

1. Safe Work Australia. Harmonisation – Background. At: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/model-whs-laws/background/pages/background.
2. Safe Work Australia. Jurisdictional progress on the model work health and safety laws. At: www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/sites/swa/model-whs-laws/pages/jurisdictional-progress-whs-laws.
3. NIOSH List of Antineoplastic and Other Hazardous Drugs in Healthcare Settings 2012. At: www.cdc.gov/niosh/docs/2012-150/pdfs/2012-150.pdf.
4. Standards Australia. At: www.standards.org.au/search/Results.aspx?k=Committee%20on%20Controlled%20Environments.
5. The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia. SHPA Practice Standards. 2013. At: www.shpa.org.au/Practice-Standards.

Self Care promotion resources launched

The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care program now provides everything a pharmacy needs to run a targeted health promotion.

PSA CEO Dr Lance Emerson, said health promotions were an important part of the changing pharmacy landscape.

'Running a successful health promotion in a pharmacy helps the business make the most of the Community Pharmacy Agreement incentives while improving health outcomes for consumers,' Dr Emerson said.

'In recognition of this, PSA's Self Care program has tailored many of its resources, available only to subscribers in the program, to focus on health promotions. This bank of resources will make it easy for pharmacies to run a health promotion each month – helping them to connect with their local community while improving the health of their customers.'

Dr Emerson said regular health promotions also helped to strengthen the pharmacy's image as a health destination.

'In addition, it enables the pharmacy to access Government funding through the Pharmacy Practice Incentives (PPI) provided for under the Fifth Community Pharmacy Agreement,' he said.

The 12 health topics currently available are: asthma, dose administration aids, hay fever, head lice, home medicine reviews, immunisation, MedsChecks, pain, skin conditions, sleep, smoking cessation and weight management.

To join Self Care contact psc.nat@psa.org.au or telephone: 1300 369 772 and talk to the Self Care team.

For each topic, Self Care pharmacies can access a one page 'how to' document showing the steps in running a health promotion, and a detailed Self Care ACTION planner to plan and run a successful promotion. Subscribers can also order a free marketing kit containing posters and related Fact Cards. In addition, Self Care pharmacies undertaking a health promotion have the facility to incorporate The Health Column into their marketing,

access presentations to educate and empower staff, presentations to engage the community, and resources and tools related to the topic.

To find out more about the Self Care Health Promotion Resources visit: www.psa.org.au/selfcare/health-promotion-resources

Pharmacy Only brand a catalyst for growth

As concerns grow over the impact of price disclosure cuts, pressure is building on OTC categories to drive profit in pharmacy, according to Ego Pharmaceuticals. And, with this in mind the company is driving a continuing increase in growth across its brands 'in correlation to their ongoing commitment to pharmacy'.

Ego's Managing Director Alan Oppenheim said Ego's strongest performing brand QV was delivering 7% of the market growth in the skincare category within pharmacy, recording a market share of 52%.¹

'Ego Pharmaceuticals believes the strong growth is a direct reflection of the strategic focus to remain in pharmacy exclusively. Our relationship with Australian pharmacy is stronger than ever and our commitment is beneficial for the success of both our brands and pharmacy. We're working closer than ever with dermatologists, nurses and GPs, while increasing our marketing to continue to drive consumers into pharmacy to purchase our products,' Mr Oppenheim said.

He said every marketing dollar that Ego spent directed people to visit pharmacy and no other retailer. The sun care category in pharmacy grew by 12% overall with Ego's SunSense range increasing by 32% – the highest contributor to category growth.²

'Make your time spent on recommendation of product focus on *Pharmacy Only* brands. Support your business. Do you want your staff recommending a brand that the consumer will buy next week at grocery? Make a difference to your business where the government decisions cannot affect you,' Mr Oppenheim said.

References

1. Aztec Pharmacy Data, 5/5/14, Cleansers, Moisturisers & Sensitive Skin Market
2. Aztec Suncare Pharmacy, Value MAT to 04/05/14.