

THE GENERAL MEDICAL SERVICES (GMS) SCHEME. EMERGENCY
SUPPLIES OF MEDICINES FOR GMS PERSONS ON DISCHARGE
FROM HOSPITAL - CIRCULATION OF INFORMATION TO GENERAL
PRACTITIONERS IN THE GMS SCHEME

**Title: The General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme. Emergency Supplies of Medicines for
GMS Persons on Discharge from Hospital - Circulation of information to General
Practitioners in the GMS Scheme**

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From: Department of Health, Ireland

To: Each Health Board Chief Executive Officer

**Re:- The General Medical Services (GMS) Scheme. Emergency supplies of medicines for
GMS persons on Discharge from Hospital - Circulation of information to General
Practitioners in the GMS Scheme.**

Dear CEO,

I refer to my earlier letter of the 6th June last in connection with the matter of dispensing emergency supplies of medicines to persons with medical cards on their discharge from hospital.

In the course of a recent meeting with representatives of the Irish Medical Organisation, it was agreed that, for information purposes, the matter should be brought to the attention of each GMS contracted doctor in each Health Board. In this regard perhaps you would make the necessary arrangements, through your Board's General Practice Unit, to have the attached letter issued to each GMS contracted doctor in your Health Board's area. It is important to point out that the "Emergency Supplies" arrangements will be reviewed in six months time when information on the operation of the scheme becomes available.

Yours sincerely

Alan Aylward
GMS Division.
24 July 1996

**To:- Each General Practitioner contracted under the General Medical Services (GMS)
Scheme.**

Dear Doctor,

As you will be aware, it has been the practice that eligible persons (i.e. medical card holders), who were discharged from hospital with a prescription form, had to request a General Practitioner (GP) participating in the GMS Scheme to transcribe their prescription in order that the required items (drugs/medicines) could be dispensed to that person.

These arrangements created certain difficulties for those persons discharged at times outside normal General Practice surgery hours, for example, late in the day or at weekends, where the items prescribed on the hospital form were required urgently.

Following an agreement between the Department of Health, the Health Boards, the Irish Medical Organisation and the Irish Pharmaceutical Union, an arrangement has been introduced, with effect from the 1st July, 1996, whereby an eligible person (i.e. a medical card holder), on discharge from hospital, may be dispensed an emergency supply of drugs/medicines by a Community Pharmacist against a hospital prescription.

Under the arrangements outlined above, a Community Pharmacist is authorised to dispense a maximum of seven days supply of drugs/medicines for eligible persons who have been inpatients of a hospital or who have attended the Accident and Emergency Department of a hospital and, because of the circumstances of their discharge and/or the urgency of the situation, it would not be possible for them to attend their GP to have the hospital prescription transcribed to a GMS prescription form.

These arrangements are being introduced on a trial basis and it is expected that they will be reviewed after six months in the light of overall experience of their operation.

The following conditions will apply to the arrangements: -

- (a) items prescribed must be written using their non-proprietary name (i.e. approved chemical name);
- (b) the name of the prescriber is to be shown in block capitals;
- (c) the prescription is to contain the person's medical card number;
- (d) the prescription quantity should not exceed a seven days supply of drugs/medicines except in exceptional circumstances;
- (e) only GMS re-imbursable items are eligible under these arrangements;
- (f) the dispensing of an emergency supply shall only be made on the day of issue of the hospital prescription. In special circumstances, an emergency supply may be made on the following day;
- (g) the arrangements will be reviewed when claims for the first six months operation of the arrangements become available and the continuation of the arrangement will be subject to the outcome of this review;
- (h) these arrangements are budget neutral as respects each doctors individual Indicative Drug Target - i.e. the cost of the drugs prescribed is not calculated against the doctors own drug target as issued to him/her by the General Medical Services (Payments) Board.

It should be noted that the arrangements set out above cover exceptional circumstances only. Existing protocols for the discharge of patients, which provide for a limited amount of drugs/medicines to be given to medical card patients on their discharge from hospital, are not affected by these arrangements.