

Dispensing

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From: Department of Health, Ireland

To: Chief Executive Officer, Each Health Board

Dear CEO

I am directed by the Minister for Health to inform you that, pursuant to a Government decision, he has issued new directions for the operation of the choice of doctor scheme. This circular may be regarded as conveying formally conditions specified by the Minister under Section 26 of the Health Act, 1970 in respect of arrangements made with doctors and pharmacists.

In future, participating doctors will no longer be obliged to dispense drugs, medicines and appliances to their patients except in areas where the Chief Executive Officer is satisfied that any alternative to dispensing by doctors would not be feasible. These limited exceptions would arise only in the case of islands and extremely remote areas. Accordingly, pursuant to paragraph 14 of the contract between health boards and participating doctors, doctors will be obliged to dispense to their patients only in areas designated by the Chief Executive Officer. Consequently, the present stock order arrangements which operate under Para. 2 of the contract between health boards and participating pharmacists will apply only in respect of drugs for doctors required to dispense to patients in the designated areas. Health boards should now consider the position of all GMS patients currently dispensed to by doctors with a view to determining whether special alternative arrangements are required. Health boards should have regard to all of the patient's circumstances and consider the practicability of the patient's having the prescription brought to a pharmacist by family members, relatives, neighbours or health board staff, where necessary.

Arrangements should be made to bring the new procedure to the notice of patients whose drugs are currently dispensed by their doctor and to provide them with an opportunity to seek special assistance from the Board.

All dispensing doctors and all pharmacists in the Board's area should be advised of the new arrangements on the date on which they come into effect and, in particular, pharmacists should be advised that stock order forms are not to be dispensed, and will not, be paid for, without the express prior approval of the Board as and from the date of coming into force of these new arrangements. Such approval should be given in respect of forms issued by doctors practising in remote areas where it is decided to continue a dispensing service.

These new arrangements are to come into effect on Friday 6th February 1987. Dispensing doctors may continue to dispense to their patients until stocks of drugs in their surgeries on 6th February have been exhausted.

Yours sincerely

J O'Rourke

Assistant Secretary, 4 February 1987