

Forged / Altered Prescriptions

Doctors are often contacted by a pharmacist querying prescriptions and it may become apparent that a doctor's prescription has been forged or altered.

Medisec advises that a doctor in this scenario ask to see a copy of the prescription presented and carefully check the medical records and prescriptions of the patient named on the prescription in question. The patient's attendances, dates, medicines prescribed and dosages should be checked against the copy prescription. The doctor should not confirm a forgery / alteration to the pharmacist if there is any doubt and should be careful not to disclose non-essential confidential patient information to the pharmacist.

Once the doctor can confirm that the prescription is forged or altered, they should advise the patient in person or in writing that it has come to their attention that a forged / altered prescription in their name was presented at the pharmacy. The doctor should inform the patient that any alteration to prescriptions is a most serious offence which generally would be reported to the authorities. The patient should be reminded that it is unsafe to be taking medication that is not prescribed by a doctor. Doctors should discuss with the patient whether they require any treatment or referrals in the case of addiction.

The patient should be asked if they can explain how this has occurred, bearing in mind that it is possible that the patient themselves did not forge the prescription. It is important to keep accurate notes of any discussions with the patient regarding the prescription(s).

Where you have reasonable suspicion that a prescription has been or is likely to be fraudulently misused then you will need to consider whether a report to the Gardaí is necessary. If you have concerns that such a report would breach patient confidentiality then you should consult Medisec for advice before proceeding further.

If there is any suspicion that forged or stolen prescriptions are in circulation you should immediately alert the HSE Primary Care / Community Care Pharmacist. The role of the HSE Primary Care / Community Care Pharmacist is to alert the local pharmacists if such prescriptions are in circulation to ensure they will not be dispensed.

Please do not hesitate to contact Medisec if you have any queries regarding the above or require specific advice.

"The contents of this publication are indicative of current developments and contain guidance on general medico legal queries. It does not constitute and should not be relied upon as definitive legal, clinical or other advice and if you have any specific queries, please contact Medisec for advice".