

prescription fraud

e-newsletter

Issue 1 : October 2015



Welcome to the first edition of Counter Fraud Services' new prescription fraud e-newsletter, providing advice and guidance in countering this type of criminal activity.

What is a fraudulent medication request?

Incidents of Fraudulent Medication involves a person practising some form of deception or forgery, or a combination of both in order to obtain medication in greater quantities than originally prescribed or not prescribed at all.

These persons may obtain or attempt to obtain the medication to consume themselves or for the diversion to others.

There is a potential risk to the user's health as a result of taking medication that was not prescribed for them. Falsely obtaining or attempting to obtain medication is also a criminal offence with the potential of receiving a heavy penalty.

Practitioners/Contractors should have appropriate systems and procedures in place to ensure that, where possible, attempts to obtain medication by fraud are not successful.

Common types of fraudulent medication activity

False Details

- Patients providing false information to become a temporary resident at a GP practice or GP practices in order to obtain drugs liable to abuse/misuse. In most cases patients also continue to receive prescriptions from their permanent GP practice.
- Persons impersonating patients, where the patient at the time was detained within the prison system, to obtain repeat prescription medication. In all reports received neither the GP practice nor the community pharmacy was aware that the patient was in prison.
- Telephone calls have been received by Pharmacies from callers impersonating GP Practice staff, GPs or other patients in order to obtain an early instalment of a multiple dispensing prescription. Callers have also impersonated GPs requesting an emergency supply of medication. These callers have knowledge of the correct procedures, jargon and patient identifiable information which may lead the Pharmacist to believe that the conversations are genuine and therefore increasing the chances of medication being dispensed.

Altered Prescriptions

- These are prescriptions that have been altered by patients with the intention to increase the quantities or the strength of medication prescribed. Medication not prescribed but added to a prescription is also considered to be as an altered prescription. Electronic

prescriptions can also be inappropriately altered with the perpetrator including the GP's initials to increase the possibility of the alerted medications being accepted as genuine and therefore dispensed.

What actions can a Practice or Pharmacy take?

Staff safety is paramount so in the detection and/or reporting of potential fraud staff should be mindful and take steps to mitigate any potential personal safety/security risks.

GP / Out of Hours

- Ask direct questions about the patients previous history and make a record, such as:
 - ◊ Do you have a doctor at the moment?
 - ◊ When where you last prescribed any medication?
 - ◊ Have you been prescribed this medication before?
 - ◊ Are you receiving medication from any other source?
- Make contact with their previous GP or ask more in depth questions about where their GP is in order to identify them.
- Consider daily or limited prescribing until verification of their circumstances can be obtained.
- Verify their identity by use of a driving licence, passport, bank statement or a medical card.
- Check ECR to establish previous prescribing.
- Where possible prescribers should avoid manually altering prescriptions after printing and use the reprint facility to make alterations. The fewer alterations there are the more likely potential alteration frauds will be noticed by the community pharmacists.
- Consider reporting any appropriate incident as a significant event on AIF1 form.

Community Pharmacies

- Consider taking steps to delay filling the prescription such as stating that you are unable to fill the prescription at the moment and would they mind coming back later to give you time to carry out the next few actions.
- Contact the Prescriber and establish if the prescription or information is accurate. If unavailable and you have strong suspicions about the validity of the prescriptions, the medication should NOT be dispensed.
- Observe their demeanour and reaction to the above information. If they become agitated and/or ask for the prescription back or react in a manner out of proportion with the request, this may again be a sign of potential fraudulent activity.
- If you are suspicious as to the validity of the prescription, consider taking a photocopy or scan of the prescription in case the person demands it back and you need to return it to avoid confrontation.
- If you become suspicious of the validity of a telephone call from a GP Practice member of staff consider calling the Practice back to confirm the call. Obtain the Practice telephone number from a trusted source and not the caller.

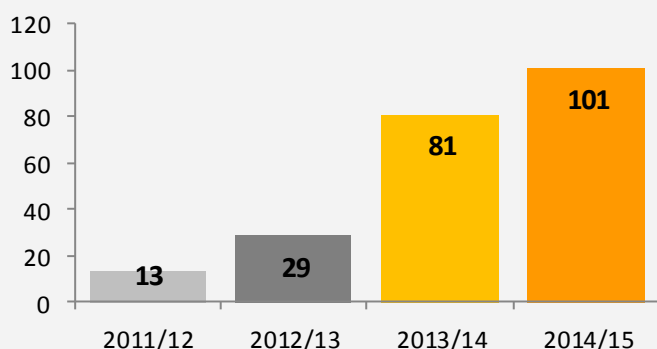
If you believe your Practice/Pharmacy has been a victim of fraud please:

- Contact Counter Fraud Services to discuss your concerns and report the matter, if appropriate.
- Report all confirmed instances of Fraudulent Medication to the Police Service of Northern Ireland on 101 (or 999 in an emergency), as these are criminal offences.
- Ensure that any CCTV that may have recorded the incident is retained and not routinely copied over.
- Ensure that all records are retained for the CFPS investigator or the PSNI investigating officer.

CFS Facts and Figures

Increase in reports

The number of reported incidents received by Counter Fraud Services has increased 677% in the past 4 financial years.

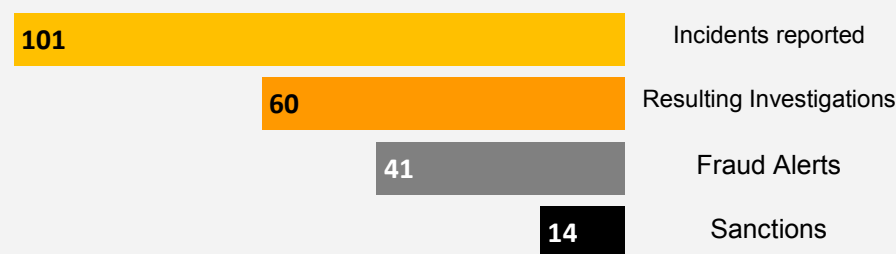


Commonly requested drugs

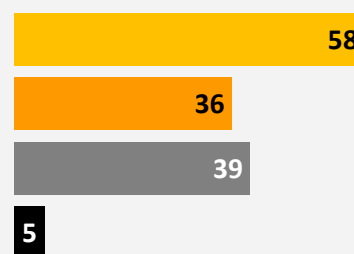
The most common types of medication requested include hypnotics, opiates and benzodiazepines such as:

- Diazepam
- Lorazepam
- Temazepam
- Nitrazepam
- Amitriptyline
- Co-Codamol
- Codeine Phosphate
- Paracetamol
- Solapadol
- Tramadol
- Dihydrocodeine
- Lyrica/Pregabalin
- Lamotrigine
- Zopiclone
- Cyclizine
- Fluoxetine
- Oxycontin
- Quetiapine

Last year (April 2014 - March 2015)



Last six months (April - Sept 2015)



Recent Case Results

GP receptionist cautioned for prescription fraud

A GP receptionist who created prescriptions without authorisation received an Adult Caution on 03 June 2015 following an investigation by Counter Fraud Services.

Michelle Cupples of 16 Bramcote Street, Belfast was cautioned for three offences under the Fraud Act (2006), having created a number of prescriptions and presented these to Community Pharmacies to obtain medication.

Patient found guilty of prescription fraud

A 24 year old man from Lurgan was found guilty at Craigavon Magistrates' Court of attempting to fraudulently obtain prescription medication and sentenced to three months in jail.

Darren Fegan of 24 Clonavon Avenue, Portadown was found guilty of three counts of fraud by false representation and three counts of forgery. The court heard the male had amended a prescription and presented this at a Community Pharmacy in an attempt to obtain medication that had not been prescribed to him.

Further Information

Additional information on prescription fraud including detailed guidance and online reporting forms are available at: www.cfps.hscni.net/reportfmr.

Current guidance issued by the HSCB on fraudulent medication is available at:

[Fraudulent Attempts to Obtain Medicines for Patients Detained In Prison](#)

[Learning for GP Practices arising from Incidents of Prescription Fraud](#)