Requirement for patient date of birth on prescriptions and dispensing records

Information for software vendors

From **1 November 2022** all prescriptions and dispensing records in NSW must bear the date of birth (DOB) of the patient. This fact sheet provides advice to software vendors on this new requirement.

Background and rationale

In NSW the data elements for prescriptions and record-keeping requirements for dispensing are defined in the Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 (the Regulation) and in various instruments.

The DOB of a person is a common and important data element used for identification purposes. It helps to prevent prescribing and dispensing errors and improve the quality of information held in digital health systems like SafeScript NSW.

While prescription requirements have minor variances between states and territories, there is increasing commonality emerging, particularly as new initiatives (for example ePrescribing) are adopted.

Changes to take effect 1 November 2022

- All prescriptions for Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines, including handwritten prescriptions and computer-generated prescriptions (those generated from prescribing clinical software and printed on paper), will require the patient's DOB[1].

- When dispensing a prescription, a pharmacist will be required to make a record of the patient's DOB in the dispensing system.

- Where a patient's DOB is not present on a prescription the pharmacist will be required to obtain it from either the patient or their agent and document it in the dispensing record. This ensures that the record provided to the Prescription Exchange Service/s includes this information.

How software vendors can support this change

Many clinical and dispensing systems already have the capability to record a patient's DOB. The current requirement for conformant electronic prescriptions to include DOB (see NSW ePrescribing requirements) as well as the requirement for the patient's DOB to be documented on prescriptions under other state and territory laws is expected to reduce the effort and complexity of developing functionality to support this regulatory change.

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[1] While DOB will be a required data element for all prescriptions, pharmacists will not be prevented from dispensing a prescription when it is not present. This is expected to simplify the introduction of these changes.

The tables below outline ways that the medical software industry can support their clients to incorporate these changes into their clinical practice.

Prescribing Software Systems

Functionality	Criticality
Ensure that patient DOB can be captured as a discrete data element in a patient profile in the prescribing system	Required
Ensure that the patient DOB is included on all computer-generated prescriptions when printed	Required
Ensure that the patient DOB is included in the message payload for all prescriptions communicated to the Prescription Exchange Services under the Electronic Transfer of Prescription[2] Scheme	Required
Prompt prescribers to document the patient DOB when creating a new patient profile and/or prior to a prescription being created	Desired
Prevent prescribers from finalising a prescription that does not include the patient DOB	Consider

Dispensing Software Systems

Functionality	Criticality
Ensure that patient DOB can be captured as a discrete data element in a patient profile in the dispensing system	Required
Ensure that the patient DOB is included in the message payload for dispensing records communicated to the Prescription Exchange Services under the Electronic Transfer of Prescription[2] Scheme	Required
Prompt pharmacists to document the patient DOB when creating a new patient profile and/or prior to a prescription being dispensed	Desired
Prompt pharmacists to document the patient DOB before finalising a dispensing for a monitored medicine	Desired
Prevent a pharmacist from dispensing a prescription unless the patient DOB is recorded on the patient's profile and/or in the dispensing record	Consider

Frequently asked questions

Will clinical practice software require approval by NSW Health as a result of these changes?

No. Under the Regulation, the obligation to comply with requirements on issuing and dispensing prescriptions remain with health practitioners. Vendors will be expected to undertake a self-assessment and ensure that the necessary functionality is in place by 1 November 2022 to facilitate compliance by health practitioners to the new legal requirement.

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[2] https://developer.digitalhealth.gov.au/products/electronic-transfer-prescription

Why will NSW require DOB on all prescriptions, when some jurisdictions only require DOB on S8 prescriptions?

DOB is already a mandatory data element for all conformant electronic prescriptions. NSW Health received feedback that it would be simplest for prescribers of handwritten prescriptions to have one rule for all prescriptions.

Which type of prescriptions are affected by these changes?

These changes affect prescriptions for all Schedule 4 and Schedule 8 medicines that are issued and dispensed in NSW. This includes:

- Handwritten prescriptions
- Computer generated (non-handwritten) prescriptions that are printed on paper. These must comply with TG184 (See https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pharmaceutical/Documents/prescriptions-nonhandwritten.pdf)
- Computer generated (electronic transfer of prescription) prescriptions[3]
- Conformant electronic prescriptions[4] (an existing requirement).

Why is a pharmacist permitted to dispense a prescription even if a DOB is not recorded on the prescription?

Where a prescription is presented which does not contain the patient DOB, the pharmacist will be required to make a record of the patient's DOB by asking the patient or their agent for the DOB. This will ensure that supply of medicine to patients is not interrupted, and ensure that the record provided to the Prescription Exchange Services includes this information.

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[3] https://developer.digitalhealth.gov.au/products/electronic-transfer-prescription
[4] https://www.digitalhealth.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/electronic-prescriptions