

General practitioner reprimanded and fined over self-prescribing and prescription forgery



Key messages from the case

Doctors are expected to avoid self-prescribing and seek independent objective medical advice when necessary – particularly if they know or suspect they have a health condition that could affect their judgement or performance.

Self-prescribing, particularly where it also involves prescription forgery, has the potential to put others at risk, as well as having significant personal and professional consequences, as this New Zealand case illustrates.

Details of the decision

Dr A, a general practitioner, was receiving treatment from her GP, who prescribed anti-anxiety and anti-depressant medication.

She was reported to the Medical Council of New Zealand by her employer and a pharmacist for self-prescribing and prescription fraud. It emerged that over a period of six years she had been self-prescribing medications including restricted medications. She had also presented Medical Practitioner Supply Orders for her own use and written prescriptions for drugs of addiction and psychotropic medications in the names of two family members, with the intention of consuming the medications herself.

The tribunal considered Dr A had put herself and others at risk personally and professionally in that:

- using family members' names meant their medication records were inaccurate and they were at risk of medication error or inappropriate treatment
- her GP was unaware of the medications she was taking and may have provided inappropriate treatment.

Dr A had admitted wrongdoing and had shown insight and remorse. After being reported she had undertaken rehabilitation and was found not to currently pose a risk to the public.

Outcome

The tribunal considered a deterrent penalty was required. Dr A was reprimanded, fined, and had supervision and prescribing conditions imposed on her registration.

Key lessons

Avoid self-prescribing and seek independent medical care.

Doctors who self-prescribe lack objectivity, and self-prescribing is not appropriate treatment. The Medical Board's Code of Conduct states that good medical practice involves not self-prescribing¹.

Self-prescribing or self-administering schedule 4 and schedule 8 medication is illegal in some Australian states.

Under Australian law it is an offence to forge a prescription, fraudulently alter a prescription, or present a known forged or altered prescription to obtain a drug.

References and further reading

Medical Council of New South Wales
– [Health, performance, conduct pathways](#)

Medical Council of New South Wales –
[Guideline for self-treating and treating family members](#)

Avant factsheet – [Treating family members, friends or staff](#)

Avant wellbeing resources – [Early detection of substance abuse](#)

Avant wellbeing resources – [Substance abuse and the medical profession](#)

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