

Dispensing incorrect medication and expired medication
16HDC00079, 12 June 2017

*Pharmacy ~ Pharmacist ~ Prescription ~ Expired medication ~ Incorrect medication ~
Rights 4(1), 4(2)*

A woman visited a pharmacy to have a prescription filled. The prescription included 90 tablets (a three-month supply) of Ferrograd F. Later that day, the woman identified that the Ferrograd F that had been dispensed to her by the pharmacy was due to expire one month into the three-month supply. The pharmacy replaced the short-dated Ferrograd F and completed an incident report. The pharmacy performed a check for expired Ferrograd F in the dispensary, but did not check the stock in the shop.

Several months later, the woman returned to the pharmacy to have another prescription filled. This prescription included 90 tablets of Ferrograd F and four tablets of mercaptopurine 50mg. The pharmacist mistakenly dispensed cabergoline 500mcg instead of the prescribed mercaptopurine 50mg, and dispensed Ferrograd F that had expired.

The following month, the error whereby the pharmacist had mistakenly dispensed cabergoline 500mcg instead of the prescribed mercaptopurine 50mg was identified by the woman and a different pharmacist. The woman had not taken the medication at this time.

A few months later, the woman noticed that the Ferrograd F most recently dispensed to her had expired, and returned it to the pharmacy. The pharmacy replaced the expired Ferrograd F.

Findings

In dispensing cabergoline 500mg instead of the prescribed mercaptopurine 50mg, the pharmacist failed to select the correct medication and failed to check the selected medication against the prescription adequately. Accordingly, the pharmacist failed to provide the woman with services in accordance with professional standards, and breached Right 4(2).

The pharmacy's failure to ensure that the medications in its stock had appropriate expiry dates led to the woman receiving expired and short-dated Ferrograd F. Accordingly, the pharmacy did not provide services to the woman with reasonable care and skill, and breached Right 4(1).

Recommendations

It was recommended that the pharmacist arrange for an assessment through the New Zealand College of Pharmacists regarding her processing of prescriptions and her processes for dispensing and checking medications, and that she provide a written apology to the woman for her breach of the Code.

It was recommended that the pharmacy conduct an audit of three months' compliance with its Standard Operating Procedures for stocktake, and provide a written apology to the woman for its breach of the Code.