

**Prolonged NSAID prescribing without appropriate monitoring  
(16HDC00594, 27 June 2017)**

*General practitioner ~ Medical centre ~ Prescribing NSAIDs ~ Monitoring ~ Repeat prescriptions ~ Knee pain ~ Documentation ~ Professional standards ~ Vicarious liability ~ Rights 4(1), 4(2)*

A woman consulted a doctor at a medical centre complaining of knee pain and was prescribed ibuprofen 200mg (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID)); the doctor also ordered a blood test.

The results of the blood test showed that the woman had elevated uric acid and creatinine levels. Her eGFR represented a moderate decrease in renal function, considered outside the range expected as “normal for aging”.

The following month, the woman consulted her usual GP at the same practice for her knee pain. The GP continued to prescribe ibuprofen, and increased the woman’s ibuprofen prescription to 800mg (modified release) two tablets once daily. Over a long period, the GP continued to prescribe ibuprofen to the woman at this strength and dosage without appropriate monitoring and without a consultation.

The woman consulted the GP complaining that she was feeling very weak. A blood test showed that she had severe renal impairment. She was admitted to hospital and diagnosed with chronic interstitial nephritis.

It was held that the GP failed in his responsibility to monitor the woman’s renal function, and to monitor his continued prescribing of ibuprofen, in accordance with the basic principles of pain management when prescribing NSAIDs. In addition, the GP did not prescribe the ibuprofen in a form that the woman could titrate easily, and did not have a face-to-face consultation with her about her condition before providing the repeat prescriptions. Accordingly, it was found that the GP breached Right 4(1). By failing to record the information he provided to the woman, the GP breached Right 4(2).

The GP’s actions in prescribing medication were found to be within the authority granted to him by the practice. Accordingly, the practice was found vicariously liable for the GP’s breach of Rights 4(1) and 4(2).

Criticism was also made that staff at the medical centre did not follow the policy regarding repeat prescriptions.

It was recommended that the medical centre notify HDC of the date of its annual NSAID audit for 2017, and provide the results of that audit to HDC.