

Forgeries

Forgeries occur when the person alters an existing prescription by either adding information or altering information that was present, and/or creates an entirely new document with prescription information whether in writing or electronically.

Forgeries are described in the *Criminal Code (R.S.C., 1985, c. C-46, s. 366)* as follows:

Forgery and Offences Resembling Forgery

Forgery

366 (1) Every one commits forgery who makes a false document, knowing it to be false, with intent

- (a) that it should in any way be used or acted on as genuine, to the prejudice of any one whether within Canada or not; or
- (b) that a person should be induced, by the belief that it is genuine, to do or to refrain from doing anything, whether within Canada or not.

Making false document

(2) Making a false document includes

- (a) altering a genuine document in any material part;
- (b) making a material addition to a genuine document or adding to it a false date, attestation, seal or other thing that is material; or
- (c) making a material alteration in a genuine document by erasure, obliteration, removal or in any other way.

Individuals may alter the strength or quantity of a written prescription or add another medication to a prescription. They may also remove prescription pads from the physician's office and create a prescription. Many prescription forgeries reported in the last few years have been created on Saskatchewan Health Authority prescription forms obtained from hospitals. An individual may also "erase" the body of a prescription and then create the desired drug information in the body of the prescription. This is occurring increasingly in regards to electronic prescriptions with the use of scanners and software, which can alter a scanned document.

When presented with a prescription for a drug in *The Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* (narcotic, controlled or benzodiazepine), the onus is on the pharmacist to ensure that the **signature if not known to the pharmacist is verified**. The prescription should also be reviewed for spelling errors, unusual dosing regimens or quantities, difference in ink or writing style as well as electronic fonts, smudges, stains, spills, missing or inaccurate information regarding dosing, quantity and other information.

A careful review of all CDSA drug prescriptions and a review of the patient's profile in the Pharmaceutical Information Program (PIP) should be undertaken. If there is anything suspicious about the prescription the pharmacist should verify that information with the physician.

The pharmacist can request a second piece of identification to verify the patient's identity if required. Patients may try to avoid detection through PIP by claiming to be from another province (and even present an out of province insurance card) or they may claim to have forgotten their health card but "know" their number. Some individuals have even assumed the identity of a family member and had a prescription written under that family member's name and identity.

Once a forgery is confirmed the prescription should be retained. If the patient insists on having it returned, the pharmacist is advised to document "refused to fill" and their initials before returning the prescription to the individual. However, **never** compromise your safety or that of your coworkers when dealing with an individual who has forged a prescription. Do your best to delay the individual while you notify local law enforcement that you have a forged prescription. If they cannot attend the pharmacy in a timely manner, indicate to the individual that you are delayed in processing the prescription in an attempt to coordinate their return with that of law enforcement.

Alternatively, you may wish to indicate to the individual that you will not be filling the prescription as per your discussions with the physician. Retain the prescription and report it to your local law enforcement agency at your earliest convenience. Forgeries are a criminal offense and as such should be reported to the police.

In regards to protection of personal health information, forgeries contain false information and, as such, the prescription is a "fraudulent" use of the health care system as per section 27(4)(b) of *The Health Information Protection Act (HIPA)*. Therefore, when requested by law enforcement, a copy of the forged prescription should be made and kept in the pharmacy and the original prescription can be provided to law enforcement by the pharmacist. It is advisable to document the police file number and badge number of the law enforcement officer on the back of the prescription copy.

All forgeries must be reported to Health Canada. A Health Canada forgery report form is located in the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals (SCPP) [online Reference Manual](#).

To disseminate information to other pharmacists about forgeries, SCPP requests that a copy of the forgery report form and details of the actual forged document be faxed to the office at (306) 584-9695. Details should include whether or not the patient presented the prescription in their own name or for someone else; whether they claimed to be from out of province or not have a Saskatchewan HSN; the type of prescription (written, electronic, customized prescription pad, RHA prescription, etc.); the altered information; the physicians name, initials, phone and fax number; and other relevant information.

Quick Reference Card
(can be laminated or posted in the pharmacy)

SUSPECT A FORGERY?	
<i>presented with a Controlled Drugs and Substances Act prescription (narcotic, controlled or benzodiazepine)</i>	
----	→ Verify physician's signature
----	→ Check PIP
----	→ Review for spelling errors, difference in ink, smudges, stains, spills missing or inaccurate information regarding dosing, quantity and other information.
----	→ Verify any discrepancies in information with physician
----	→ Request a second piece of identification to verify patient's identity (if not known to you or from out of province)
YES ----	→ Forgery is confirmed ---- → Retain the prescription
----	→ Contact police. If police can attend, delay patient or make arrangements for patient to return when police will be in attendance.
----	→ If patient wants it back ---- → write "refused to fill"
----	→ NEVER compromise safety of yourself or co-workers
----	→ Make a copy of the forgery (record file# and badge# of police officer)
----	→ May provide police with original prescription
----	→ Report forgery to Health Canada
----	→ Report forgery to SCPP

Questions?
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