

Pharmacy licensing: Closure and relocation

5 April 2020

Guidance for pharmacy operators.

General

- Given the evolving nature of the current situation, there may be a need for pharmacies to close or relocate in a shorter time frame than in normal circumstances.
- We ask that affected pharmacy operators engage with the Medicines Control branch of Medsafe to seek guidance on licensing issues.
- In addition, to support the continuity of care for patients who will be affected, please also engage with the district health board (DHB) portfolio manager.
- Where possible please try to communicate before commencing actions to relocate or close.
- Early communication with Medicines Control and the DHB helps us to provide solutions quickly.
- Although the current situation is unprecedented, regulatory and professional requirements still apply to pharmacy practice as these are in place to ensure public safety.

Contacting Medicines Control

- The Medicines Control branch of Medsafe is currently working remotely and responding to a high volume of enquiries. As the team may not be contactable by phone in the first instance, please email any enquiries to medicinescontrol@health.govt.nz and one of the team will be in contact.
- Pharmacy operators can assist us to maintain clear lines of communication by having a single contact person engaging with Medicines Control.

Licensing

- The most likely scenarios which may arise in the current situation are that a pharmacy needs to close (either temporarily or permanently) **or** relocate to another licensed pharmacy **or** relocate to another premises that is currently unlicensed.
- In all cases please engage with Medicines Control and work with the DHB portfolio manager to ensure continuity of care for patients who may be affected.

1. Pharmacy Closure

- Where a closure is temporary (for example intended to be for a short period of time) the pharmacy licence is considered to be surrendered.
- During the period that the pharmacy is not operating, the security of health information and pharmaceuticals must be maintained.

- When the pharmacy is ready to resume operating the pharmacy operator can apply for the licence to be re-instated at any time up to the expiry date of the current licence (there are no fees payable to re-instate a licence that has been surrendered).
- Where a closure is permanent, the pharmacy operator is required to surrender the pharmacy licence to Medicines Control, and all health information and pharmaceuticals need to be appropriately removed from the premises.
- Where specific circumstances arise where it would not be possible to meet the requirements, for example if pharmaceuticals or health information are not able to be removed from the premises, Medicines Control should be contacted and will work with the pharmacy operator and the DHB on a case-by-case basis.

2. Relocation of a pharmacy to another licensed pharmacy

- A licence to operate pharmacy specifies the defined location from which pharmacy practice activities can occur, and only one pharmacy licence can be issued in respect of a defined location.
- In a situation where pharmacy A is closing (temporarily or permanently) and wishes to relocate pharmacy activities to pharmacy B, pharmacy A is no longer operating.
- All pharmacy activities occurring from pharmacy B occur under the licence held by pharmacy B, and this must be clearly reflected. This includes, for example the labelling of all dispensed medicines reflecting the identity of pharmacy B, and the records maintained at pharmacy B accurately reflecting the pharmacy practice activities that have occurred from the premises.

3. Relocation of a pharmacy to a location that is currently unlicensed

- Where a pharmacy plans to relocate to a new premises that does not hold an active pharmacy licence, an application for a pharmacy licence is required for the new location.
- The processing of applications in these cases will be prioritised by Medicines Control.
- The pharmacy operator is encouraged to contact Medicines Control as soon as possible, who can assist with guidance on the appropriateness and subsequent licencing of the premises.
- Please promptly advise Medicines Control should any issues be anticipated in respect of the new location, as this assists us to work through these on a case-by-case basis.

Questions

Please contact the Medicines Control branch of Medsafe (medicinescontrol@health.govt.nz) with any questions regarding the pharmacy licensing framework.