

27 January 2021

A/Prof Chris Freeman  
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia  
381 Royal Parade  
Parkville VIC 3052

Via email: [apf@psa.org.au](mailto:apf@psa.org.au)

Dear A/Prof Freeman,

**Re: Changes to labelling of dispensed antibiotics by pharmacists to help reduce bacterial resistance to antibiotics**

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) thanks the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia (PSA) for your letter dated 15 December 2020 regarding the new changes to the labelling of dispensed antibiotics by pharmacists to be implemented in January 2021.

The RACGP would like to raise our concerns as per our [original response](#) in September 2020 and further enquire as below for these to be taken into consideration.

*Changes to the cautionary advisory label from 'until all taken' to 'take for [the number of] days as advised by your prescriber'*

The RACGP is supportive of this change. As we have previously recommended, these changes should be done in conjunction with pharmacists only dispensing the required number of doses, matching the duration the patient should be taking the antibiotics, when this has been specified by the prescriber. The RACGP queries if the approach of splitting packs can be promoted to achieve this? This approach ensures only the required number of doses are dispensed and mitigates the risk of patients stockpiling antibiotics when they fail to return unused portions of antibiotics for disposal at the pharmacy.

*Communication between prescriber and pharmacist. Pharmacists should always seek prescriber clarification on the duration for antibiotic use if this has not been specified on the script*

The RACGP emphasises that it is impractical to have pharmacist communication with the prescribing general practitioner to clarify where the duration for antibiotic use is unclear, as the prescriber may not be available at the time when the patient presents a prescription. The RACGP recommends the pharmacist only contacts prescribers in high-risk situations. The [Antibiotic prescribing in primary care: Therapeutic Guidelines summary table](#) provides information for situations when the duration of antibiotic use is unclear.

*Letter to MSIA*

As mentioned above, it is impractical for the pharmacist to contact the prescriber every time the duration for antibiotic use is unclear. The RACGP recommends removing this action in the letter. Otherwise, the RACGP is supportive of the revised letter to MSIA and will be happy to review and sign an updated version.



Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

Healthy Profession.  
Healthy Australia.

The RACGP looks forward to your response and to continue working with the PSA on this important issue. For any enquiries regarding this letter and advice on member communication, please contact Stephan Groombridge, eHealth and Quality Care Manager on 03 8699 0544 or [stephan.groombridge@racgp.org.au](mailto:stephan.groombridge@racgp.org.au).

Yours sincerely

**Dr Karen Price**  
President