



MIDWIVES AND PHARMACISTS: ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES

Collaboration between health care professionals is key to quality care. Each individual depends on the performance of the whole so knowledge of (and respect for) others' contributions, good communication and working well together is necessary for good quality care. A newly registered midwife or one new to an area, can initiate an effective working relationship in the first instance by introducing her/himself to the local pharmacy team.

Pharmacists can provide midwives and the women and their families with services such as drug information, monitoring drug therapy and counselling about medicines. They are the health professionals with the knowledge, skills and attributes to take responsibility for the management and utilisation of medicines. If in doubt about medicine combinations, interactions, dosages etc, pharmacists are there to help.

As authorised prescribers, the Medicines Amendment Regulations 2011 allows midwives to prescribe for women and their newborn infant that are under their care, in accordance with their scope of practice as defined by the Midwifery Council. A midwife's scope of practice directs her to "work in partnership with women on her own professional responsibility, to give women the necessary support, care and advice during pregnancy, labour and the postpartum period up to six weeks, to facilitate births and to provide care for the newborn".

Pharmacists will dispense prescriptions 'on their face' and accept that what is prescribed is legitimate, unless there is reason to believe that a prescription does not comply with legal requirements. If a pharmacist is concerned that the prescription is outside the prescriber's scope of practice or if there are clinical concerns about the prescription, they will discuss this with the prescriber in the first instance. Effective communication, which is timely, accurate, complete and unambiguous reduces errors and results in improved patient safety.

Today, healthcare is more complex and diverse, and improving collaboration and communication among healthcare professionals is likely to support the safe delivery of patient care.

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