

1. DISPENSING AND SALE OF SPECTACLES IN CLINIC TO PATIENTS

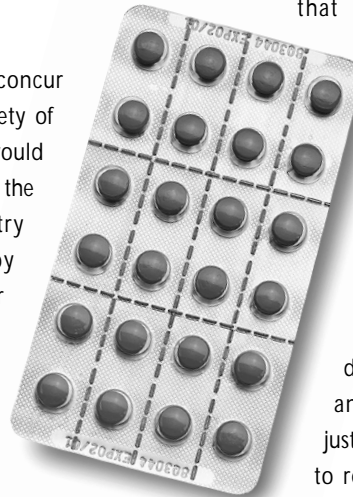
The SMA received an enquiry from an Ophthalmologist in private practice who is considering dispensing and selling spectacles to his patients in his clinic. The SMA wrote to the Singapore Society of Ophthalmology to seek its views with regards to the ethical issues pertaining to dispensing and sales of spectacles in clinics.

In his reply to us dated 2 November 1999, A/Prof Paul Chew, President of Singapore Society of Ophthalmology stated that "the Society has no ethical objections to Ophthalmologist dispensing spectacles, subject to the following provisos:

- a. That the Ophthalmologist does not advertise his/her optometry services

- b. That the buyer of the spectacles be a patient of the Ophthalmologist. If not, he is to be registered as one, receives an appropriate ophthalmic exam and is charged consultation fees. Buyers not registered as a patient with the Ophthalmologist should not be allowed to purchase spectacles from the Ophthalmologist.
- c. That the Ophthalmologist dispensing the spectacles must ensure that he meets the necessary stipulations for doing so."

The SMA's views concur with those of the Society of Ophthalmology. We would like to further add that the pricing of optometry services provided by doctors within their clinics should follow the principle of pricing of medicines during in-clinic dispensing, as published in "The Medical Profession and Pharmaceuticals", 1998. We would also like to reiterate that the general ethical principles in the SMA and SMC Ethical Codes should be observed.



2. RETURN OF UNUSED MEDICINES

Occasionally, patients may return unused medicines prescribed by their doctor and request for refund due to reasons such as allergic reaction to the drugs, etc. The SMA wrote to the National Pharmaceutical Administration for advice and guidelines. The reply from NPA dated 21 July 2000 is reproduced for your information:

- i. "Currently, there are no regulations that govern the return of medicines. In general, the return of unused medicines is not encouraged. However, some discretion must be exercised when the drugs are expensive and there is a good justification for patients to return the medicines such as when the patient is allergic to the drug or when the treatment has to be discontinued due to side effects, etc.
- ii. Medicines should only be accepted if they are returned within an acceptable time frame. The Medicines should also be carefully examined to ensure that they remain in good conditions.
- iii. To ensure the integrity of the product, only products which are still in the sealed original packs should be returned. Products which have been opened or in loose forms should not be accepted.
- iv. The following items should not be returned:
 - Items that require special storage condition, e.g. in the fridge
 - Inhalers and nasal sprays
 - Mixture which has been reconstituted
 - Extemporaneous preparations"

In general, doctors should only accept return of unused medicines if these are in conditions which can be dispensed to other patients. ■

SMA Announcement

Dear SMA member,

Several of you have approached your Council Members recently, for help in obtaining payment for services rendered on behalf of a Medical Service Organisation after seeing patients registered on their Health Benefits Scheme.

These Members have expressed frustration because of an inability to get a satisfactory response of any kind. The SMA will try to assist, by direct representation to the Company on behalf of affected Members. We will only resort to legal action if this fails.

If you are affected and wish to be included on the list that the SMA represents, please call Ms Tan Hwee Ping at Tel: 223-1264 by 25 September. She will fax you a form to fill.

*Yours faithfully,
Dr Lee Pheng Soon
Dr Tan Kok Soo
Coordinators*