Monitored Drugs Prescribing Code

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Preface

Prescription (Schedule 4 (s4) and Schedule 8 (s8)) drugs that cause the greatest harm to the South Australian community are **Monitored Drugs**. Monitored Drugs are listed in regulation 3 of the *Controlled Substances (Poisons) Regulations 2026* (the Poisons Regulations). All s8 drugs (drugs of dependence) are Monitored Drugs, as are the following s4 drugs:

- any S4 poison that is a Benzodiazepine;
- any S4 poison that contains Codeine;
- any of the following S4 poisons:
  - Gabapentin;
  - Pregabalin;
  - Quetiapine;
  - Tramadol;
  - Zolpidem;
  - Zopiclone.

Sections 18A(a1) and 31(1) of the *Controlled Substances Act 1984* (the Act) provide that a registered health practitioner may prescribe or supply a s8 drug to a person if they are acting in the ordinary course of their profession, if

- they are a dentist, medical practitioner or nurse practitioner; or
- their registration is endorsed under Section 94 of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as being qualified to prescribe or supply a scheduled medicine or class of scheduled medicines, and the drug is a scheduled medicine or of a class of scheduled medicines specified in the endorsement; or
- they are authorised to prescribe or supply the drug by the Poisons Regulations.

In accordance with section 18A(1) of the Act, a registered health practitioner must not prescribe or supply a s8 drug to:

- a person for regular use during a period:
  - exceeding 2 months, or
  - that, together with any other period that a drug of dependence has, to the practitioner's knowledge, been prescribed or supplied by a registered health practitioner, would result in drugs of dependence being regularly used by the person during a period exceeding two (2) months; or
- a person who the practitioner knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, is dependent on drugs;[1]

unless either:

- **the practitioner prescribes or supplies the drug in accordance with an authority granted by the Minister (an authority); or**
- **an exemption applies.**

[1] A person is dependent on drugs if the person has either: (a) acquired, as a result of the repeated administration of prescription drugs or controlled drugs, an overpowering desire for the continued administration of any such drugs and is likely to suffer mental or physical distress or disorder upon cessation of the administration of the drug; or (b) a history of consuming or using prescription drugs or controlled drugs in a manner that presents a risk to that person's health, or in the case of drugs lawfully supplied to the person, is contrary to the prescribing practitioner's instructions relating to the consumption or use of the drug (Section 18A(2) of the Act).

Regulation 23 of the Poisons Regulations provides exemptions from section 18A(1).

One exemption listed in Regulation 23 is where the drug is prescribed or supplied **in accordance with the Monitored Drugs Prescribing Code.**[2]

This Monitored Drugs Prescribing Code (The Prescribing Code) sets out requirements for prescribing or supplying a s8 drug where a section 18A authority is not required. It incorporates the mandatory requirements needed to ensure compliance with the Act and the Poisons Regulations.

The Prescribing Code does not make clinical recommendations, and compliance does not endorse prescribing. Prescribers are responsible for determining whether a treatment is appropriate for each patient and they are expected to meet professional standards set out in the National Prescribing Competencies Framework.

[2] As published by the Department for Health and Wellbeing.

Prescribing or supplying in accordance with this Prescribing Code

A registered health practitioner prescribes or supplies a s8 drug in accordance with this Prescribing Code[3] if they:

1. prescribe or supply a drug listed in Column 1 of Table 1; and
2. are a registered health practitioner listed in Column 2 of Table 1; and
3. are not prescribing or supplying a drug to a person who:
    a. has confounding mental health conditions (e.g. a history of psychosis or bipolar disorder); or
    b. has a history of substance abuse, diversion, or misuse of monitored drugs, or is reasonably believed to be drug dependent;[3] or
    c. is listed on the Section 58 Privileged Circular;[4] or
    d. is listed in Column 3 of Table 1; and
4. comply with the specific requirements in Column 4 of Table 1; and
5. gives the prescription (written or approved electronic form) in a manner that is compliant with the Act and Poisons Regulations;[5] and
6. takes all reasonable steps to check relevant information held in **Script**Check**SA** when prescribing or supplying the s8 drug.[6]

Additionally, a registered health practitioner supplies a s8 drug in accordance with this Code, if the practitioner is a pharmacist:

a. dispensing the drug on the prescription of a person of a class authorised by this Code to prescribe the drug; and
b. is acting in the ordinary course of the pharmacist's profession.

Application

This Prescribing Code applies to all registered health practitioners authorised to prescribe, or supply, Monitored Drugs in South Australia.

1. When prescribing for Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Table 1).

[3] As defined in Section 18A(2) of the Act.

[4] If a person has been determined on reasonable grounds as having a history of consuming drugs in a quantity or manner that presents a risk to the person's health, or obtained or attempted to obtain drugs by false pretences or other unlawful means, or obtained or attempted to obtain drugs for an unlawful purpose, Section 58 of the Act allows the Minister to publish information to prescribed persons to help limit further supply of potentially harmful drugs to that person. If listed, a person will have a Privileged Circular badge with relevant details recorded in their **Script**Check**SA** profile.

[5] Regulations 35 and 36 of the Poisons Regulations.

[6] Regulations 37 and 41 of the Poisons Regulations.

Table 1: Prescribing or supplying in accordance with this Code (to be read in conjunction with the requirements in *Prescribing or supplying in accordance with this Prescribing Code* section)			
Column 1 **Drug or drug class**	**Column 2** **Registered health practitioner**	**Column 3** **Additional patient exclusions**	**Column 4** **Additional requirements**
S8 Stimulant drugs for ADHD, namely all formulations of: • Dexamfetamine; • Lisdexamfetamine; or • Methylphenidate.	1. **Medical practitioner** who is registered in the speciality of paediatrics and child health (**paediatrician**).	A patient who is less than 4 years of age.	1. Prescribe in accordance with the **Australian Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline for ADHD and ADHD Prescribing Guide for Australian Healthcare Professionals** (AADPA Guidelines).[7]
	2. **Medical practitioner** who is registered in the speciality of psychiatry (**psychiatrist**).		
	3. **Medical practitioner** who is registered in the speciality of physician (neurology) (**neurologist**).		
	4. **Medical practitioner** who: • is registered in the specialty of general practice (**GP**); and • has successfully completed the South Australia ADHD GP training program (or an equivalent training program)[8] to undertake diagnosis, initiation and continuation prescribing of ADHD drugs in both adult and paediatric patients (**ADHD trained GP**).	A patient who is: • less than 4 years of age; or • between 4 and 7 years of age, unless a paediatrician, psychiatrist, or neurologist; has diagnosed ADHD and supports the prescription or supply.	1. Manage the patient's ADHD in accordance with any **National Standard model for GP ADHD Management.** 2. Prescribe in accordance with the **Australian Evidence-Based Clinical Practice Guideline for ADHD and ADHD Prescribing Guide for Australian Healthcare Professionals** (AADPA Guidelines).[8]
	5. **Medical practitioner** who is registered in the specialty of general practice.	A patient who is: • less than 4 years of age; or • between 4 and 7 years of age, unless a paediatrician, psychiatrist, or neurologist; has diagnosed ADHD and supports the prescription or supply; or • 8 years of age or older, unless a paediatrician, psychiatrist, neurologist or ADHD trained GP has diagnosed ADHD and supports the prescription or supply.	
Prescribing a s8 stimulant drug that does not meet the criteria set out in *Prescribing or supplying in accordance with this Prescribing Code* and Table 1 does not comply with the Prescribing Code and is not exempt from the requirement to obtain a section 18A authority. Apply for a Section 18A authority through ScriptCheckSA.			

[7] The Australasian ADHD Professionals Association in Australia and New Zealand.

[8] As listed on the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) website. Available at: https://www.racgp.org.au/the-racgp/faculties/sa/adhd

For more information

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