



## **RN(NP) Prescribing Controlled Drugs and Substances FAQ**

### **When are RN(NP)s authorized to prescribe controlled drugs and substances?**

Effective January 13, 2015, RN(NP)s in SK are authorized to prescribe controlled drugs and substances.

### **What are controlled drugs & substances?**

Controlled drugs and substances are medications that include those prescribed to treat medical conditions such as pain, anxiety, attention-deficit disorder and other conditions. These medications have the potential to cause patient harm if used improperly; for this reason they are controlled by the Federal Government under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.

### **What is a registered nurse (nurse practitioner) [RN(NP)]?**

A RN(NP) is a registered nurse with advanced education, knowledge, and skills. RN(NP)s are integral members of the health care team who provide and coordinate initial, continuing and comprehensive advanced nursing services in rural, remote and urban areas of the province. RN(NP)s serve the diverse populations of Saskatchewan across the continuum of health care throughout the life span. The spectrum of health services that RN(NP)s provide encompasses: health promotion and maintenance of wellness; illness and injury prevention; and health care management of common acute and chronic illnesses. There are approximately 185 RN(NP)s in the province.

### **When was the decision made to enable RN(NP)s to prescribe controlled drugs & substances?**

In November 2012 the federal government made changes to regulations under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act* that would enable RN(NP)s in Canada to prescribe controlled drugs and substances. Because health care is regulated by the provinces and territories, RN(NP)s in SK were not able to prescribe these drugs until they had the legislated authority in SK to do so. This meant changes had to be made to the SRNA

bylaws; the Health Information Protection Act (HIPA) regulations; and the Prescription Review Program (PRP). In addition, processes also needed to be put in place to ensure that RN(NP)s had the knowledge, skill and abilities to prescribe these drugs and substances.

**Are RN(NP)s qualified to prescribe controlled drugs and substances?**

Yes. All RN(NP)s currently licensed with the SRNA have received the necessary education required to prescribe controlled drugs and substances. In addition, the two provincial RN(NP) education programs have incorporated the necessary theory into their curriculums so that beginning practitioners will have the required knowledge to prescribe upon graduation. As part of their continuing competence, RN(NP)s will be expected to participate in ongoing continuing education to ensure that they maintain their competencies to prescribe controlled drugs and substances.

**What can RN(NP)s prescribe?**

Although the Prescription Review Program has a panel of drugs, there are some limits as to what controlled drugs and substances a RN(NP)s can prescribe. For example, at this time, RN(NP)s do not have the authority to prescribe methadone, buprenorphine or medical marijuana. In addition, testosterone (oral and intramuscular routes) is the only anabolic steroid that RN(NP)s are authorized to prescribe.

**Is there a greater risk of increased prescription drug abuse and misuse now that there are more health professionals prescribing controlled drugs and substances?**

No. The legislation provides the people of SK with greater access to timely primary care. The education that the RN(NP)s have received includes content specific to safe prescribing including risk assessment for addiction and drug diversion. In addition, RN(NP)s will have the ability to access their client's medication history where the Pharmaceutical Information Program (PIP) is available. All prescribers will participate in the Prescription Review Program (PRP).

**What is the Pharmaceutical Information Program (PIP)?**

The PIP is offered by the Ministry of Health as part of the Electronic Health Record initiative. PIP is a secure, web-based computer application that allows authorized users, such as RN(NP)s and physicians, to confidentially access accurate medication histories of their patients.

PIP is used by these authorized health care providers in their treatment decisions to improve the quality, safety, and management of their client's health care. For more information please visit: <http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/pip>.

### **What is the Prescription Review Program (PRP)?**

The Prescriptive Review Program (PRP) was established in 2006 by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Health to monitor the prescribing of controlled drugs and substances as part of the legislative requirement of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*. It is administered by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan. The SRNA is a partner in this program along with the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan, and the College of Dental Surgeons of Saskatchewan.

The objectives of the PRP include:

- To reduce the abuse and diversion of a select panel of prescription drugs;
- To minimize risk of harm to patients;
- To alert prescribers to possible inappropriate prescribing;
- To seek an explanation from a prescriber when data indicates prescribing or dispensing practices are not consistent with acceptable professional standards; and
- To encourage appropriate prescribing and dispensing.

The primary purpose of the PRP is to allow the SRNA to educate and monitor Registered Nurse (Nurse Practitioner)s to ensure compliance with established standards and competencies.

For more information please visit:

<http://formulary.drugplan.health.gov.sk.ca/PDFs/ThePrescriptionReviewProgram.pdf>.