

Consultation on amendment of the Medicines (Standing Order) Regulations to enable nurse practitioners to issue standing orders

Please respond to the questions below.

1. What do you see as the potential benefits of an amendment to the Regulations to authorise nurse practitioners to issue standing orders **now** rather than as part of the review of the regulatory regime for therapeutic products?

The Nursing Council of New Zealand supports the immediate removal of legislative barriers to enable nurse practitioners and optometrists to practise to the full extent of their scope of practice, as authorised prescribers. The Council believes that waiting for implementation of the new therapeutic products is an unnecessary delay as these prescribers were granted authorised prescriber status in July 2014.

All nurse practitioners have a minimum of four years' experience in the area they seek to be registered in and have completed a clinical Masters which includes advanced assessment and diagnostic reasoning, pharmacotherapeutics and have been assessed against the nurse practitioner competencies by an expert panel of authorised prescribers.

The Council believes that the proposed amendment to the Medicines (Standing Order) Regulations will extend nurse practitioners current practice by allowing them to issue standing orders to support timely, efficient and accessible patient care, particularly in rural and under-resourced regions across New Zealand and for groups of patients who are at risk of not being able to access appropriate health care services.

2. What do you see as the potential risks of an amendment to the Regulations to authorise nurse practitioners to issue standing orders **now** rather than as part of the review of the regulatory regime for therapeutic products?


As authorised prescribers, nurse practitioners are experts at complying with the regulatory requirements and analysing the risk / benefits associated with all prescribing decisions. The Council is confident that the cautious and safe prescribing practice of nurse practitioners will continue through to cautious and safe issuing of standing orders.

Nurse practitioners understand the registered nurse scope of practice and have expertise in assessing registered nurses competence with regard to medicine management including for standing orders, and for delegating care and treatment to registered nurses and other health professionals. While all registered nurses are responsible and accountable for maintaining their competence for medicine management, only sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable registered nurses will accept the responsibilities associated with the supply and or administration of medicines in accordance with standing orders issued by a nurse practitioner. The Council considers that allowing nurse practitioners to issue standing orders does not increase the harm to patients associated with unsafe practice.

3. Please provide examples to show the implications of an amendment to the Regulations to authorise nurse practitioners to issue standing orders **now** rather than as part of the review of the regulatory regime for therapeutic products?

A nurse practitioner working in an aged care facility would be able to issue standing orders for common medicines: this would facilitate the timely administration of medication for minor health issues by the registered nurse, rather than having to delay care until the nurse practitioner or a medical practitioner could visit to review the patient's health care needs.

A nurse practitioner practising in a rural primary health care setting where there are no other authorised prescribing colleagues could issue standing orders for common conditions and health related needs. Registered nurses working in the practice could initiate timely and efficient treatment including medicines for their patients, including common conditions, e.g. the dispensing of inhalers and spacers for asthma. It could also include enabling registered nurses visiting patients at home to provide timely care, for example immunisations for children who have missed regular health checks.


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