

## **The Continued Dispensing of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Medicines in Defined Circumstances (Continued Dispensing) initiative**

### **Background**

For urgent requirements, pharmacists have the capacity under Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation to supply limited quantities of prescription medicines in the absence of a written prescription. Continued Dispensing is intended to complement but not replace the provisions of other supply arrangements in urgent or emergency situations.

### **What is Continued Dispensing?**

Continued Dispensing is the supply of an eligible medicine to a consumer under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) when there is an immediate need for that medicine but it is not practicable to obtain a prescription.

In order for the pharmacist to be able to supply in this manner, they must:

- ensure the medicine has been previously prescribed, therapy is stable and there has been prior clinical review by the prescriber that supports the continuation of the medicine; and
- assess that continuation of the medicine is safe and appropriate for the consumer.

Under Continued Dispensing, pharmacists may supply the standard PBS quantity of eligible medicine as a PBS item and claim any relevant Government subsidy as part of their routine PBS claim. Consumers pay the relevant PBS co-payment. Only one Continued Dispensing supply is allowed per year for each eligible PBS medicine.

The PBS medicines eligible for supply by Continued Dispensing are:

- Cholesterol lowering agents (specifically HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors); and
- Oral contraceptives.

### **Implementation**

Commonwealth legislation has been changed to enable this initiative. In addition, State and Territory legislation must also be changed to allow Continued Dispensing as an emergency supply option within each specific jurisdiction. Continued Dispensing is prohibited in each jurisdiction until such changes happen.

A number of states and territories are expected to have Continued Dispensing enabling legislation in place from 1 September 2013. However, it is the responsibility of pharmacists in each state and territory to ensure that the necessary legislation is in place before undertaking a Continued Dispensing supply.

### **Professional Guidelines**

Pharmacists should familiarise themselves with and follow the *Guidelines for the Continued Dispensing of eligible prescribed medicines by pharmacists* developed by the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and available at [www.psa.org.au](http://www.psa.org.au)

