

State Board of Pharmacy Emergency Rules Suspension
****Explanations and Suggestions ****

The following rules have been suspended for a 30-day time period starting March 17th as part of the Governor's emergency declaration regarding COVID 19. We will update any extension regarding this suspension of rules as we are notified:

1. Remove requirements for an endorsement on a pharmacist or intern license to administer medications Rule 09-00-0002.

Properly trained pharmacists or interns can administer vaccines and other drugs without needing an additional endorsement on their license from the Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy during this declared emergency. The pharmacist or intern also does not need to have current CPR certification at this time to administer medications.

2. Remove requirements for an endorsement to act as a Consultant Pharmacist 17-92-412. Nursing home consultant permit.

Nursing homes are a very vulnerable population group and additional pharmacy staff may be needed in this crisis to manage medications. Pharmacists can act as a nursing home consultant during this declared emergency without the need for a nursing home consultant endorsement on their license.

3. Remove requirements for an endorsement to provide Disease State Management via written protocols Rule 09-01-0001.

This could be a game changer for your pharmacy practice. Pharmacists can enter into written protocol agreements with physicians to treat their patients without needing a Disease State Management endorsement or additional certification with the Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy. The patient has to have a prior relationship with a physician (nurse practitioners not included), if agreed by the physician the pharmacist can use his/her professional judgment to treat their patients as outlined in a written protocol agreement. [Adjusted dosages, management of chronic diseases, treatment of minor illness, etc]. It is highly suggested that documentation be provided with an eCare plan.

4. Intern ratio limitation of 1 intern working per pharmacist is waived during this time period. As a reminder, the intern ratio is already waived for educational experiences and Interns are more highly educated and have more ability to work than technicians (taking new prescriptions over the phone, screening patients, administering medications and immunizations as well as counseling patients) 02-01-0004 (h) 4.

You can hire additional student pharmacist interns to help in your pharmacy operations during this time. This may be especially advantageous if your pharmacy personnel become ill or your practice is expanded by the provision of disease state management and the increased workload. Job announcements can be distributed to the students via Nicki Hilliard at NLHilliard@uams.edu and/or Melissa Quesinberry at mquesinberry@harding.edu as well as via the Arkansas Pharmacist Q&A Facebook group.

Therapeutic substitution if a medication is not available and there is a therapeutically equivalent medication available during the emergency the pharmacist can discuss with the patient and substitute with a notice sent to the prescriber of the substitution due to emergency when the prescriber is unavailable. **The first medication we have agreement with the medical community on would be any of the albuterol or levalbuterol inhalers as they are in short supply immediately. If you have a patient in need of an albuterol or levalbuterol inhaler that is not available currently you may automatically substitute and change the prescription to another available therapeutically equivalent product (a different albuterol or levalbuterol inhaler). The Board would suggest checking for continued insurance coverage and this should be discussed with the patient prior to substitution to ensure they know what is going on. We will continue to monitor drug shortages as this moves forward for other medications for possible inclusion... 17-92-101 (18) (B)

Pharmacists already have the authority to therapeutically substitute a medication if written prior approval is on the prescription indicating that it can be substituted (TSA – Therapeutic Substitution Approved or MTS – May Therapeutically Substitute); this would allow substitution without prior written permission if this situation were warranted to best manage patient care when the provider is unavailable to be reached. The pharmacist should notify the prescriber as to the change due to this emergency.

Additionally, the Board of Pharmacy has the ability on a case-by-case basis of need to review and consider approval for the following (if you have interest in pursuing this you need to contact the Board of Pharmacy office)

04-02-0012 – RETAIL PHARMACY OFF SITE ORDER ENTRY (currently limited between licensed retail pharmacies)

04-05-0004 - OFF SITE ORDER ENTRY (hospital):

Ability for a pharmacist to perform order entry, order verification, prescription input review and prescription processing off-site. This consideration does not mean that a pharmacy can operate without a pharmacist being present on site in the pharmacy to supervise activities and perform final checks on products in pharmacies. While currently available to hospital pharmacies we can allow for retail permits as well by temporary waiver and can waive the required Board appearance for temporary approval.

We appreciate the pharmacists working as frontline providers in this unprecedented demand on our healthcare system. Your Arkansas State Board of Pharmacy and Arkansas Pharmacists Association are here to help you provide the best care possible for the citizens of our great state. Do not hesitate to reach out if we can be of assistance.

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