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License Renewals

License renewal applications will be mailed prior to March 1 to every currently licensed pharmacist at his or her mailing address of record. The correctly completed renewal application, with all required fees and attachments, must be received by the Board no later than April 1. Since April 1 is a Sunday, **applications must be received in the Board office no later than Monday, April 2.**

Do not send continuing education (CE) certificates to the Board office unless specifically requested to do so. The South Carolina Board of Pharmacy will not be responsible for any CE certificates, unless they have been requested.

Although last year we listed the top five reasons renewal applications were returned as unacceptable, the number of returns did not decrease. The best advice we can give is to **read and follow the instructions.**

- ◆ Sign and date the application.
- ◆ Include the proper fee – \$80 if received on or before April 2, 2001, \$130 if received after April 2, plus a civil penalty if received after May 1 and you have practiced in South Carolina.
- ◆ Total of 15 CE hours, six of these must be live, seven and a half hours of this total must be in drug therapy or patient management. All must be American Council on Pharmaceutical Education approved or Continuing Medical Education Category I earned between January 1, 1999, and the date on which you submit your renewal. You must have your certificate in hand. If exempt from CE, proper documentation must be attached to the application.

We Want to Hear from You!

In accordance with §40-43-91(E), all licensed pharmacists and registered technicians who change their mailing address must notify the Board in writing within 10 days, listing their name, license or registration number, and new mailing address. Also, remember to designate the Board of Pharmacy office as the recipient of your notification on your envelope.

Medication Errors

One can hardly avoid the issue of medication errors in pharmacy practice. There has been heightened awareness among the public, legislatures, and the media to the serious health concern that affects all pharmacists, physicians, and patients regarding these errors. The Board of Pharmacy would like to caution all pharmacists to take the necessary steps in their practice setting to ensure accuracy, especially on prescriptions involving pediatric patients. Dosing errors involving teaspoons and milliliters can create serious risks to patients over a large range of products. Errors such as one teaspoonful instead of one milliliter and three to four teaspoonfuls instead of three-fourths of a teaspoonful are examples of recently

reported errors. Fortunately, many of these dosing errors can be detected and avoided during counseling sessions with the patient's caregiver. Proper patient counseling is another opportunity to ensure the prescription's accuracy while fulfilling our duty to promote patient compliance.

Board Position on Prescriptions and Prescribing Problems

The South Carolina Board of Pharmacy has received numerous complaints regarding illegible, incorrect, incomplete, and incompatible prescriptions as well as communication problems between prescribers and pharmacists. The Board of Pharmacy has reminded prescribers through the *Board of Medical Examiners' Newsletter* of §40-43-86(E) of the South Carolina Pharmacy Practice Act that outlines what a prescription drug order shall contain. Section 40-43-86(E) states, "A prescription drug order shall contain at a minimum, the:

- (1) full name and address of the patient;
- (2) name, address, telephone number, and degree classification of the prescriber; license number and Drug Enforcement Agency registration number of the prescribing practitioner where required by law;
- (3) date of issuance;
- (4) name, strength, dosage form, and quantity of drug prescribed;
- (5) directions for use;
- (6) number of refills authorized. No prescription marked 'PRN' or any other nonspecified number of refills may be refilled more than two years beyond the date it was originally written. Nothing in this subsection abridges the right of a pharmacist to refuse to fill or refill a prescription; and
- (7) a written order signed by the prescriber, which shall bear the name of the patient; name, strength, and quantity of the drug or device prescribed; directions for use; date of issue; and, either rubber stamped, typed, printed by hand, or typeset, the name, address, telephone number, and degree classification of the prescriber, and, if a controlled substance is prescribed, the prescriber's federal registration number;
- (8) only one drug and set of instructions for each blank, if pre-printed;
- (9) a chart order is exempt from the requirements of Section 40-43-86(E)."

Illegible handwriting, incorrect prescription formats, and the lack of required prescribing information are several specific areas of concern for the Board. In order for South Carolina pharmacists to accurately dispense medications to the citizens of our state, it is imperative that there be a joint effort between prescribers and pharmacists to address prescription problems. This effort will ultimately decrease the potential for prescription errors and protect the health, safety,

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and welfare of the public. When the above issues are addressed appropriately, the end result will be better communication between health care providers with improvement in the overall care of our patients.

Expired Drugs/Reverse Distributors

Recent pharmacy inspections have uncovered a disturbing trend regarding expired drugs in active stock. It seems that pharmacies utilizing "reverse distributors" are sometimes left with expired drugs on their shelves by these types of services. These services are often contracted to remove expired drugs from the active stock and return them to the manufacturer for some type of credit. On occasion, these services do not remove every expired item, and inspections have revealed alarming errors. The Board of Pharmacy would like to remind all pharmacists that it is the responsibility of the pharmacist-in-charge (PIC) to ensure that expired drugs are not contained in active stock. The use of these services does not absolve the PIC from his or her responsibility to ensure that expired products are not dispensed. It is suggested that these services be used in conjunction with the pharmacy's own expired drug removal program.

Where Have All the Technicians Gone?

Comments from Don Ballington, Director of Pharmacy Technician Program, Midlands Technical College

Need a trained pharmacy technician? Have you noticed technicians appear to be more difficult to find? The answer may be nearly as complex as dealing with numbers of pharmacists. However, the solution is not so complex. There are four technical college pharmacy technician training programs in South Carolina. All of our technical college programs are accredited or in the process of gaining accreditation. These programs offer a solid foundation of general education, technical courses, laboratory, and experiential hands-on training. Students amass hundreds to 1,000 or more hours of instruction and training. Graduates are well prepared to take the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board (PTCB) exam.

Training through a technical college program will cover the broad scope of pharmacy, especially in the areas of community and institution practice. Programs may vary slightly as to technical content, while some colleges offer variations of their degrees with more specific outcomes in mind. Comprehensive technical college programs provide students with an opportunity to look at the profession of pharmacy from the inside, to gain a marketable skill that is recognized across the nation, and to gain full- or part-time employment while furthering their education, if this is desired.

Accreditation of our technical college programs provides established standards for quality education, stimulates currency of instruction with practice, provides instructional direction, gives

prestige to the graduates, provides national recognition for the training programs, and offers a means for prospective students to evaluate and select a training program.

The Greenville/Spartanburg areas are served by programs at Greenville and Spartanburg technical colleges. Trident Technical College serves the Charleston area. Midlands Technical College serves Columbia and surrounding communities with a local program and with distance learning into Aiken, Sumter, the Low Country, and the Pee Dee. Students in distance learning take most of their classes at their local technical college. Secondary laboratories are set up in Dillon for students in the Pee Dee, and in Varnville for Low Country students. Experiential training is arranged in the student's home community where feasible.

Midlands also provides three curricula for the technician student. The standard program is a three-semester diploma covering institutional and community practice. A two-semester certificate is also offered with an emphasis on community practice. An associate degree offers a second year of general education beyond the diploma with courses that carry transferability in meeting some pre-pharmacy requirements.

As demands for pharmacy services dramatically increase over the next five years, we can move toward meeting projected needs if pharmacists will partner with our colleges in recruiting and identifying prospective technician students and serving as experiential training sites. The reality of today is that enrollment is declining in pharmacy technician programs as it is for other health and nursing programs. Pharmacy, including pharmacy organizations, need to become proactive in spreading the word concerning the need for technical workers in this, the most respected profession in America. Technical colleges, unlike colleges of pharmacy, can rapidly gear up for increased enrollment or multiple classes per year, which is a valuable resource in meeting manpower needs with quality competent technicians. Together we can make a difference.

Call Midlands Technical College Pharmacy Technician Program at 803/822-3591.

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