Professional Memorandum

To: Pharmacists, Certified Dispensers, Pharmacy Technicians, Pharmacy Students and Interns

From: Beverley Zwicker, Registrar

Date: May 18, 2018

Re: Removal of Section 56 Exemption Requirement to Prescribe Methadone

As of May 19th, 2018 prescribers are no longer required to have an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act to prescribe methadone.

What does this mean for pharmacists?
Pharmacists no longer have to confirm that a prescriber is authorized to prescribe methadone. The requirement to confirm this has been removed from the NSCP Standards of Practice: Opioid Agonist Maintenance Treatment Services; all other expectations as set out in the Standards remain unchanged.

Although prescribers no longer have to apply for an exemption to prescribe methadone, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia and the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia expect prescribers to have the appropriate training and education, including relevant courses offered by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and to only undertake prescribing in accordance with their own Standards of Practice as set out in the Methadone Maintenance Treatment Handbook.

This change by Health Canada may, overtime, result in pharmacists encountering situations where they need to provide clarity and guidance on recommended practice in Opiate Agonist Maintenance treatment to new prescribers.

The NSCP encourages pharmacists involved in the provision of OAMT to remain diligent in their role as the medication expert in the patient’s OAMT healthcare team and to ensure that the delivery of these services continues be done in a safe and effective manner consistent with the NSCP Standards of Practice: Opioid Agonist Maintenance Treatment Services.