Professional Notice

To: Pharmacy Practitioners
From: Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists
Date: October 26, 2018
Re: Update to the Witnessing Requirements for Methadone and Buprenorphine/Naloxone

To help address capacity issues at the pharmacy level in providing witnessed ingestion of methadone and buprenorphine/naloxone, the NSCP Council has made amendments to Appendix H of the Standards of Practice: Opiate Agonist Maintenance Treatment (OAMT).

As the treatment for opiate use disorder shifts from methadone as first line therapy to buprenorphine/naloxone, pharmacists are challenged to accommodate the increasing numbers of patients seeking treatment.

While pharmacists remain responsible for ensuring it is appropriate for a patient to receive their dose, once this is assessed, it is reasonable that other members of the pharmacy team could be involved in the provision of this service.

The following changes have been made to Appendix H of the Standards of Practice: Opiate Agonist Maintenance Treatment to provide flexibility to pharmacies in the use of their human resources while ensuring the quality and safety of their OAMT services.

For Patients Receiving Methadone

It is the responsibility of the pharmacist to personally assess the patient to determine whether it is appropriate to provide them with their dose. Once completed, a pharmacist or licensed pharmacy technician will witness the ingestion of the dose, ensuring that the methadone has been swallowed by having the patient talk and/or drink water after ingestion.

For Patients Receiving Buprenorphine/Naloxone

It is the responsibility of the pharmacist to personally assess the patient to determine whether it is appropriate to provide them with their dose. Once completed, the pharmacist may involve another team member to observe the patient place the tablet(s) in the mouth and monitor the patient to discreetly and respectfully check on the dissolution of the tablet(s) until complete. For clarity, a pharmacist or licensed pharmacy technician must confirm, at the time of ingestion, the accuracy of the dose being released to the patient BEFORE a pharmacy assistant or other pharmacy team member may witness the ingestion.