

**DEPARTMENT of HEALTH
and HUMAN SERVICES**

Community Health Services
Public & Environmental Health Service
Pharmaceutical Services

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28 August 2011

CONFIDENTIAL

CIRCULAR TO VETERINARY SURGEONS IN TASMANIA

Clients who may be seeking drugs which are subject to misuse

A report has been received by Pharmaceutical Services Branch of the recent overdose of a person with phenobarbitone. The medication had been prescribed for the treatment of their dog for epilepsy. This person has also recently sought diazepam injections for the treatment of their animal. The animal is unwell and so it can place veterinarians in a difficult situation if they have concerns with particular requests from owners. **Please contact Pharmaceutical Services Branch on 62 332064 before prescribing if you do have any concerns.**

The above case is not isolated and a person who died from an overdose in 2007 had been seeking psychoactive medication, again phenobarbitone and diazepam, from a veterinary surgeon as one source of the drugs.

This pattern of activity is of concern as it would appear that where persons are having difficulty accessing drugs through medical practitioners, veterinary surgeons may also become targeted as a source of supply.

Tasmania has high rates of the misuse of pharmaceuticals and associated morbidity and mortality. This state also has high rates of the illicit injection of these medications compared with other states and territories.

Veterinary surgeons are asked to:

- Apply caution where persons approach you for the supply or prescribing of named psychoactive medication i.e. barbiturates, benzodiazepines.
- Apply particular caution to the supply or prescribing of barbiturates that carry a high risk of overdose and death if misused. Barbiturates are now rarely used in human medicine and it may be appropriate to supply limited supplies of these substances in the interests of the safety of clients and their families. Clients should be advised on their safe storage.

Again please contact the Branch on 6233 2064 if you have any queries.

Mary Sharpe
Chief Pharmacist

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