

Prescribing Abuses

Pharmacists have reported widespread abuse by doctors and dentists of certain prescription drugs during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the Pharmacy Board passed an emergency rule to address the situation. To view the emergency rule, click on this link:

<http://www.ncbop.org/LawsRules/COVID19DrugPreservationRule21NCAC46.1819.pdf>

In addition, the Pharmacy Board has requested that we post the following notice to all dentists:

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR HYDROXYCHLOROQUINE, CHLOROQUINE, AZITHROMYCIN, KALETRA, AND OTHER MEDICATIONS. Board staff and public health officials at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services are aware of numerous reports from pharmacists across the state concerning new prescriptions for hydroxychloroquine, chloroquine, azithromycin, Kaletra, and potentially other medications – often in large quantities with a high number of refills -- to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports include these prescriptions being issued by prescribers for themselves and family members, and for persons who have not been exposed to or infected by the COVID-19 virus. Board staff and public health officials are aware that some prescription drug wholesalers are reporting shortages of these drugs. Board staff are aware that at least three other state boards of pharmacies have passed emergency rules limiting the circumstances under which these drugs may be dispensed, and their quantities.

All health care providers are reminded that, while these drugs are being investigated as potential COVID-19 treatments, there is at this date only anecdotal evidence of their potential usefulness. Public health authorities are working to obtain better data on their potential -- and most appropriate -- use in the pandemic.

Pharmacists are reminded of their ability to refuse to fill prescriptions that, in the pharmacist's professional judgment, are not clinically appropriate. And exercising that professional judgment may include setting reasonable policies designed to ensure that prescription drugs are available for all patients, including by use of partial fills of limited days' supply and otherwise ensuring that patients taking these medications for established, and approved, indications do not have their drug therapy interrupted. 21 NCAC 46.1801.

Public health officials at the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services are working with appropriate stakeholders, including the Board of Pharmacy, to issue guidance and take actions on this issue that are designed to best protect the public health and safety. Please continue to monitor the Board of Pharmacy website for updates on this, and other, issues.