



Refusal/Withholding of Medication Procedure

Procedure Number
WCDHB-PN-0043

Version Nos:
7

1. Purpose

This Procedure is performed as a means of ensuring that the West Coast District Health Board (WCDHB) nursing staff and patients are aware of the process to follow when a patient refuses medication or where staff wish to withhold medication from a patient.

2. Application

This Procedure is to be followed by all nursing staff throughout WCDHB.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Procedure:

Prescribing medications is the responsibility of the Doctor;

Dispensing medications is the role of the Pharmacist;

Administration of medications is undertaken by nurses.

4. Staff Authorised To Perform Procedure

- i) Registered nurse(RN)/midwife; and
- ii) Enrolled nurse or nurse assistant (under RN direction).

5. Resources Required

- i) WCDHB Drug Treatment Sheet.
- ii) WCDHB Refusal of Treatment/Discharge Against Professional Advice Form

6. Process

1.00 Patient Refusal To Accept Medication

1.01 WCDHB recognises that patients have the right to refuse medications, as per Section 11 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights (1990) and Right 7(7) of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers Rights (1996), except where the patient is either undergoing assessment pursuant to Sections 11 and 13 of the Mental Health Compulsory Treatment and Assessment Act (1992), or is subject to a compulsory treatment order (under the Mental Health Compulsory Treatment and Assessment Act (1992)) during the first month of that order.

1.01 If a patient refuses to accept medication, the nursing staff involved have a responsibility to listen to and document the patient's views.

1.02 The views of the patient need to be brought to the attention of the prescribing doctor, who (in consultation with the nursing staff) will explain to the patient the:

- reasons why the medication was prescribed; and
- the likely consequences to the patient of not taking the medication.



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- 1.04 After having completed Section 1.02, and the patient still wishes to refuse the medication they are to be offer a second opinion or discussion with another clinical staff member.
- 1.05 If the patient still refuses to accept the medication then their views must be complied with.
- 1.05 All staff involved must document clearly in the patient's clinical record that the:
- reasons why the medication was prescribed; and
 - the likely consequences to the patient of not taking the medication.
- were explained to the patient, and that the patient still refused to accept the medication.

2.00 Withholding of Medications

- 2.01 Nurses may withhold medication from a patient where they believe that patient safety may be imminently compromised (e.g. adverse reaction) by the administration of the medication
- 2.02 Where a nurse withholds medication from a patient this must be documented in the patient's clinical record, as well as the nurse's rationale for withholding the medication.
- 2.03 Where a nurse withholds medication from a patient, they must notify the prescribing doctor as soon as is reasonably practicable that the medication has been withheld, and their rationale for withholding the medication.
- 2.04 Where the withholding nurse if not a registered nurse, they must inform the supervising registered nurse.

7. Precautions And Considerations

- ➔ Patients (except those under the Mental Health (compulsory Assessment and Treatment Act) have the right to refuse medication.
- ➔ Nurses may withhold medication from a patient where they believe that patient safety may be imminently compromised
- ➔ All actions by staff relating to patients refusing medication and the withholding of medication must be clearly documented in the relevant patient's clinical record.

8. References

Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (1995)
Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003
New Zealand Nursing Council Code of Conduct for Nurses and Midwives (1995)
Health Act (1956)
Hospitals Act (1957)
Hospitals Regulations (1993)
Medicines Act (1981)
Medicines Regulations (1984)



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Misuse of Drugs Act (1975)
Misuse of Drug Regulations (1977)

9. Related Documents

WCDHB Administration of Medications Procedure
WCDHB Administration of Medications by Students Procedure
WCDHB Controlled Drugs Procedure
WCDHB Emergency Orders and Verbal Orders Procedure
WCDHB Medication Errors Procedure
WCDHB Medication For On-Leave Patients Procedure
WCDHB Medication Policy
WCDHB Nurse Initiated Medications Procedures
WCDHB Nursing Standards
WCDHB Practice Development Programme
WCDHB Self-Medicating Patients
WCDHB Storing and Labelling Medication Procedure
WCDHB Use of Traditional and Alternative Medications Procedure

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| Revision History | Version: | 7 |
| | Developed By: | Senior Nurses |
| | Authorised By: | Director of Nursing & Midwifery |
| | Date Authorised: | February 1996 |
| | Date Last Reviewed: | May 2011 |
| | Date Of Next Review: | May 2013 |