
PRESCRIPTION

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Prescription is a written communication between the doctor and patient. The meaning of a prescription in the dictionary is "an instruction written by a medical practitioner that authorizes a patient to be issued with a medicine or treatment". To put it in simple words, it is a set of instructions that are laid down on paper for the patients to follow. This also means that the doctor has written a set of instructions which makes it a valid document that can be used against the doctor. So writing the prescription becomes critical as it has a legal standing in the court. The recent notification of the government has left many medical practitioners confused as to how to go about writing their prescriptions. Also it is observed that most doctors do not maintain an OPD paper of every patient they check. They just make a prescription which becomes even more dangerous as the doctors do not have any document to support their claims. In this article we look into all the medico legal aspects that are important while writing a prescription.

- Only Issue a prescription once you have examined a patient, it may be physically or nowadays thru online consultation. A prescription should preferably be handed over directly to the patient rather than the relative.

Content of a Prescription

- Prescription must contain -
 - Doctor's full name,
 - Address
 - Qualification and registration number
 - Contact number
 - Patients' name
 - Date

- For the Instructions for medicine
 - Prescribed drug - preferably in capital letters
 - Mention drug strength very clearly
 - Preferably mention the generic drug
 - Frequency of the drugs
 - Total number of tablets to be taken.
 - Duration for the treatment should also be mentioned.
- Below the instruction of medicine add additional instructions which will provide the guideline for the treatment like Dos (e.g., exercise, bathing instruction, to have more of leafy vegetables in diet, etc) and don'ts (e.g. smoking, alcohol, heavy exercise as the case may demand).
- Mention advised investigations if any.
- Always enter the next date of visit (always write an appointment date).
- Rubber stamp of the doctor with the sign is a must to make the prescription legally valid.

Medicolegal Aspect of Prescription

- A Prescription should be preferably on the doctor's letter pad. Do not use chemists or drug companies' ready-to-use prescription pads.
- Unless the patient is totally cured, it is a good habit to call him/her on the next date. If patient fails to keep follow up date and if some complication occurs then patient is also considered negligent. (Contributory negligence.)
- Do not mention the amount of fees collected from the patient on the prescription.
- Every patient issued a prescription should be entered in the OPD register. Even if he has come for a follow-up or just to show the reports to the doctor.
- For every visit of the patient issue a different prescription.
- Use a single pen to write a Prescription, do not use multiple pens or different color pen to write a prescription. If you prescription is in multiple

pens and is taken to the court of law it may be said that the doctor has modified the prescription later.

- If you want to add anything to the prescription on a later date, always mention the date along with the points added and re-sign it.
- Never let your subordinate fill a prescription for you. They may be prone to spelling mistakes which may lead to misleading in names of medicines.
- As far as possible do not use abbreviations. If you must use them explain them to the patient before you hand over the prescription.
- Never use another doctor's prescription, even with his consent. You should also not allow another doctor to use your prescription.

To conclude it is very important to repeat the instructions even when you give a prescription. Always keep some form of notes of your findings and the course of treatment with yourself because if a patient does get into any medico legal problem you should have some data to back your claims in the court of law.