Drug shortages: Message to physicians

The search for potential treatments for COVID-19 is resulting in nationwide shortages for certain drugs. A new emergency rule from the state aims to ensure our patients continue to have access to the drugs they need.

In accordance with the new rule, the following drugs are now classified as “Restricted Drugs”:

- Hydroxychloroquine
- Chloroquine
- Lopinavir-ritonavir
- Ribavirin
- Oseltamivir
- Darunavir
- Azithromycin

Pharmacists will not fill or refill prescriptions for these Restricted Drugs without a written diagnosis from a prescriber. These drugs may not be prescribed in prevention or anticipation of a COVID-19 infection. Thank you for your attention to these new rules to prevent drug shortages as we work together to care for our patients.

Drug shortages: FAQ

Q: What restrictions apply to dispensing the Restricted Drugs?

A: Pharmacists will only fill or refill prescriptions for these Restricted Drugs if the prescription includes a written diagnosis from the prescriber, including for electronic prescriptions. Prescribers and their agents can phone in prescriptions for these drugs if the pharmacy records the diagnosis information and the identity of the prescriber or prescriber’s agent.

Q: What if I need a Restricted Drug for a patient with a COVID-19 diagnosis?

A: Prescriptions for a Restricted Drug to treat COVID-19 must include the COVID-19 diagnosis and are limited to a 14-day supply. That prescription cannot be refilled. A refill will require a new prescription order with diagnosis information. No emergency refills can be provided for Restricted Drugs prescribed for a COVID-19 diagnosis.

Q: Can I prescribe a Restricted Drug for prevention of a COVID-19 infection?

A: No. A Restricted Drug cannot be dispensed to prevent a COVID-19 infection or in anticipation of a COVID-19 infection.

Q: What about patients who were already taking a Restricted Drug for a condition other than COVID-19, prior to the new rule?

A: The new rule does not apply to prescriptions for a Restricted Drug for a patient who was previously established on that particular drug on or before March 10 2020.
Q: Does the rule affect dispensing to inpatients at hospital facilities?

A: No. This rule does not apply to orders to administer restricted drugs to inpatients at healthcare facilities.