

From the desk of the MIMS Managing Editor

Up-scheduling of Alprazolam to Schedule 8 on 1 February 2014

In response to the increasing illicit use of alprazolam and evidence of alprazolam dependence, alprazolam is to be up-scheduled from Schedule 4 to Schedule 8 of the Standard for the Uniform Scheduling of Medicines and Poisons on 1 February 2014.

Consequently alprazolam will become a Schedule 8 drug (drug of addiction) in Australia Poisons List as of 1 February 2014.

The up-scheduling of alprazolam to Schedule 8 will apply to all forms and preparations of alprazolam. Currently available alprazolam products include: Alprax, Alprazolam Sandoz, Alprazolam-GA, Chemmart Alprazolam, GenRx Alprazolam, Kalma, Ralozam, Terry White Chemists Alprazolam, and Xanax tablets.

From 1 February 2014, as a result of this scheduling amendment, healthcare professionals practising in Australia will need to note the following with regard to alprazolam (and as applicable to all drugs of addiction).

Doctors

- **Prescribing:** The legislative requirements for prescribers in relation to obtaining S8 permits will apply with alprazolam when it is rescheduled as a S8 poison from 1 February 2014.
- **Storage:** Medical Practitioners in possession of alprazolam should store it in a secure locked cupboard and record it in a drug register as for any other Schedule 8 drug. Destruction is only permitted by a community (retail) pharmacist in the presence of the medical practitioner, or by or under the direct supervision of a police officer or a person authorised by the Ministry of Health, such as a Pharmaceutical Services inspector.

Pharmacists

- **Storage:** A pharmacist must keep alprazolam, along with other S8 medications, in a steel safe meeting the specified requirements for a safe within a pharmacy. The safe must be securely locked when the drugs are not in use.
- **Drug register:** Records of alprazolam transactions (purchases and supplies) must be entered in the drug register on the day of the transaction. A separate page of the register must be used for each brand name and strength of alprazolam.



- **Destruction:** The destruction of alprazolam and all drugs of addiction may be carried out by or under the direct supervision of a police officer, an authorised officer of the Ministry of Health or a Pharmacy Council inspector.
- **Prescriptions:** Prescriptions for alprazolam must be written by an authorized prescriber and must comply with standard requirements for an S8 prescription. Alprazolam may NOT be supplied under the Emergency Supply arrangements.
The restrictions for alprazolam repeats will be the same as other S8 medicines.



Nurses and nurse practitioners

- **Storage and records:** Alprazolam will need to be stored as per any other Schedule 8 drug in the drug safe. The receipt and supply of alprazolam will need to be recorded in the drug register as per all other Schedule 8
- drugs.
- **Administration:** The administration of alprazolam will need to be signed for, witnessed and countersigned as per the facility's protocol for any Schedule 8 drug.
- **Prescribing:** Nurse practitioners whose scope of practice and/or approved formulary currently permits the prescribing of alprazolam will be subject to the same authority requirements for prescribing as for medical practitioners.

Dental practitioners

- In NSW, a dental practitioner may only issue a prescription for alprazolam in the course of dental treatment for a period not exceeding one month's continuous treatment of a patient in a hospital. As alprazolam is NOT listed in the current PBS, dental practitioners will NOT be permitted to prescribe alprazolam outside of a hospital from 1 February 2014.
- Please check with your state/territory drugs and poisons unit regarding prescribing of alprazolam by dentists

For more information

NSW: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pharmaceutical/Pages/alprazolam-upscheduling.aspx>

VIC: <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/dpcs/reqhealth.htm>

SA: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/drugsofdependence

WA: http://www.public.health.wa.gov.au/2/1292/2/drugs_of_dependence_schedule__medicines.pm

TAS: <http://www.racgp.org.au/download/Documents/Media/HealthAlerts/alprazolams82014.pdf>

QLD: No online information. Contact: QLD Drugs of Dependence Unit, Queensland Health: 07 3328 9890

NT: No online information. Contact: NT Poisons Control Unit, Department of Health and Community Services: 08 8922 7341.

ACT: No online information. Contact: ACT Pharmaceutical Services, ACT Health: 02 6205 1700

RACGP: <http://www.racgp.org.au/yourracgp/news/health-alerts/rescheduling-of-alprazolam-to-a-schedule-8-drug/>

