

**Dispensing prescriptions for a practitioner or their family**

In the past, the North Dakota State Board of Medicine has requested that the Board of Pharmacy audit pharmacies in one of our cities to determine if prescriptions were dispensed by pharmacists that were written by a provider for themselves or a member of their family. This is meant for guidance on the issues surrounding prescribing by practitioner for themselves or family members.

**Controlled substances:** Providers may not legally prescribe controlled substances for themselves or their immediate family members. The Medical Practice Act – NDCC 43-17-31 (23) includes the following clause as “Grounds for Disciplinary Action”: “The prescribing, selling, administering, distributing, or giving to oneself or to one’s spouse or child any drug legally classified as a controlled substance or recognized as an addictive or dangerous drug.”

**Non-controlled substances:** Filling non-controlled substances for a provider or their family member is your professional decision. If a provider requests a pharmaceutical for an acute medical condition for themselves or an immediate family member – such as an antibiotic – it is likely appropriate to dispense the medication. However, if the medication is for a chronic medical diagnosis or a medication that has potential for abuse, such as gabapentin, then the situation is questionable at best – or in the worst case scenario – is a possible violation of NDCC Chapter 61-04-04 “Unprofessional Conduct”. It also may be appropriate to review the situation with other pharmacists in your community and contact the Board of Pharmacy if polypharmacy is discovered.

These situations are opportunities for pharmacists to assist providers with appropriate pharmaceutical care. Prescriptions written outside of the scope of practice for a prescriber may not technically be illegal, but may invite discipline by their peers on the Medical Board if patient care is compromised. Alternatively, the provider may be acting appropriately by basing their care on the results of a referral to a specialist or other provider. Use your best judgement, and don’t be afraid to ask questions if you are uncomfortable with a situation.