

## Corresponding Responsibility

The rules of the Drug Enforcement Administration specify that a dispensing pharmacist has a corresponding responsibility with the prescribing practitioner to assure a prescription has been issued for a legitimate medical purpose in the usual course of that practitioner's professional practice. A prescription issued outside these parameters is not a prescription under the federal Controlled Substance Act (CSA).

A pharmacist is required to exercise sound professional judgment when making a determination about the legitimacy of a controlled substance prescription. Such a determination is made before the prescription is dispensed. The law does not require a pharmacist to dispense a prescription of doubtful, questionable, or suspicious origin. To the contrary, the pharmacist who deliberately looks the other way when there is reason to believe that the purported prescription had not been issued for a legitimate medical purpose, may be prosecuted along with the issuing practitioner, for knowingly and intentionally distributing controlled substances, a felony offense which may result in the loss of one's business or professional license.

What is a pharmacist to do when presented with a suspicious prescription? Although a pharmacist may be reluctant to "get involved," there really is no choice. The pharmacist is involved because a pharmacist's professional responsibilities make him or her subject to the requirements of the CSA. If you find one or two prescriptions which appear to be irregular, the best remedy may be to call the prescribing physician about your concern. Often, a friendly bit of advice from a fellow professional may be all that is needed to correct an apparent irregularity.

However, where there appears to be a pattern of prescription abuses or a question as to the status of a prescriber, the pharmacist's refusing to dispense certain prescriptions may not be enough. Abusers will simply go elsewhere, possibly to another pharmacist with whom the prescriber has an understanding. Anyone having a question regarding the licensure status of or wanting to file a complaint about a particular practitioner should contact the appropriate licensing board. The appropriate licensing board can assist in you in determining whether the prescriber is authorized to issue prescriptions. The Web sites listed below may include disciplinary actions for their respective licensees.

Texas State Board of Medical Examiners—800-248-4062, [www.tsbme.state.tx.us](http://www.tsbme.state.tx.us)

Texas State Board of Dental Examiners—512-463-6400, [www.tsbde.state.tx.us](http://www.tsbde.state.tx.us)

Board of Nurse Examiners (for the State of Texas) – 512-305-7500, [www.bne.state.tx.us](http://www.bne.state.tx.us)

Texas State Board of Podiatric Medical Examiners – 512-305-7000, [www.foot.state.tx.us](http://www.foot.state.tx.us)

Texas State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners—512-305-7555, [www.tbvme.state.tx.us](http://www.tbvme.state.tx.us)

Health Professions Council Complaint Line – 1-800-821-3205