

Legal requirements for the prescribing of alprazolam

Alprazolam is listed as a declared restricted substance under the Tasmanian Poisons (Declared Restricted Substance Order 1990) commonly referred to as a S4D. This requires that alprazolam and all other drugs listed as S4D's (e.g. other benzodiazepines, panadeine forte, anabolic steroids) :

- Prescriptions dispensed in Tasmania can only be written by prescribers registered in Tasmania.
- Repeat intervals must be stated on prescriptions.
- Prescription is valid for 6 months only from date of writing.
- No emergency supply by a pharmacist without a prescriber's authority can occur.
- Possession without authority is illegal unless in accordance with a legal prescription.
- Patients declared as drug dependent can only be prescribed an S4D by their authorised opioid prescriber.

In addition the regulatory requirements around the prescribing of alprazolam are:

- All prescriptions dispensed for alprazolam are reported with the required reporting of dispensed schedule 8 substances from Tasmanian pharmacies. (Note: alprazolam remains S4D)
- **The prescribing of alprazolam for more than 4 weeks in conjunction with any opioid requires the prescriber to obtain an authority to prescribe under Section 59C of the Poisons Act 1971. Alprazolam is a specified substance for the purposes of this section. Authorities are issued in a similar manner to the opioid authorities.**
- Alprazolam prescribing to patients receiving an opioid pharmacotherapy **will not** be legally authorised unless endorsed by the Clinical Director of the Alcohol and Drug Services. This is also a requirement of the Tasmanian Pharmacotherapy Policy.
- Prescribers will be notified not to prescribe alprazolam if a patient is already under the care of another medical practitioner who is also prescribing benzodiazepines and/or opioids.