

POLICY STATEMENT

Statement Regarding Pharmacists' Refusal to Provide Products or Services for Moral or Religious Reasons

June 2000

The use of prescribed drugs for emergency contraception and euthanasia is an arising issue that has prompted the pharmacy regulatory authorities to address the balance between the individual rights of pharmacists and professional responsibilities to their patients.

In response to the need for a clear and consistent regulatory policy on this matter, NAPRA Council approved a model regulatory position statement on November 14, 1999. This model statement was developed following preliminary review by Council and Pharmacy Registrars in April 1999 and external consultation with member Provincial and Territorial Regulatory Authorities, the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists, the Canadian Pharmacists Association and the Consumers' Association of Canada, throughout the summer months.

In June of 2000, the Prince Edward Island Pharmacy Board approved the Statement to provide direction and guidance on this issue to Island pharmacists.

“Pharmacists shall hold the health and safety of the public to be their first consideration in the practice of their profession. Pharmacists who object, as a matter of conscience, to providing a particular pharmacy product or service must be prepared to explain the basis of their objections. Objecting pharmacists have a responsibility to participate in a system designed to respect a patient's right to receive pharmacy products and services.”

The following policy clauses reflect the need to meet a patient's requirements for pharmacy products and services while respecting a pharmacist's right of conscience:

- 1. A pharmacist is permitted to object to the provision of a certain pharmacy product or service if it appears to conflict with the pharmacist's view of morality or religious beliefs and if the pharmacist believes that his or her conscience will be harmed by providing the product or service. Objections should be conveyed to the pharmacy manager, not to the patient.*
- 2. The individual pharmacist must pre-arrange access to an alternate source, to enable the patient to obtain the service or product that they need. Any alternate means must minimize inconvenience or suffering to the patient or patient's agent”.*