

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



**South African
Pharmacy Council**

PROFESSIONAL FEES FOR PHARMACISTS PUBLISHED – INFORMATION FOR THE PROFESSION AND PUBLIC

The South African Pharmacy Council has, in consultation with various stakeholders, determined professional fees to be charged by pharmacists following an unprecedented research study involving Pharmacy Schools and other major stakeholders. This study resulted in the production of a research report on ***the services for which a pharmacist may levy a fee*** and costs for providing the services.

This study clearly showed that pharmacists perform professional functions independently of any products that are supplied or sold. It is therefore logical and fair that pharmacists should be appropriately remunerated for these services, and the professional fee for these services should be independent of the price of any medicine supplied.

The fees were published on 28 May 2009 for comment in a Board Notice in the Government Gazette. After extensive comment was received, the fees were finalised and on 27 November 2009 a final Board Notice was published notifying the public and the pharmacy profession of the recommended professional fees that pharmacists may charge in 2010. Furthermore, in accordance with the National Health Act, the report has been submitted for the development of the Reference Price List in order to determine the professional fees that a pharmacist may charge from 2010, as is the case with all other health professionals.

The announcement clarified payment for services, and gave medical schemes the opportunity to incorporate the services into their benefit schedules for 2010.

Publication of the fees will enable the public to be aware of the recommended professional fee that the pharmacist may charge for additional services, such as blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring services, which services have historically been offered by pharmacists without pricing guidelines, resulting in inconsistent pricing.

An important objective of the Pharmacy Council is to protect the public. One way in which the Council achieves this is by establishing and monitoring standards of service provided in pharmacies. The setting of the fees will also provide a basis to investigate allegations of overcharging by pharmacists. Publication of the new fees will protect consumers from exploitation while ensuring that pharmacists are remunerated fairly for their services.

Council supports Government in its efforts to make medicines affordable and accessible, and to ensure that the pricing of medicines is transparent. At the same time, Council is of the opinion that it is in the interest of the public that the pharmacy profession continues to provide accessible pharmaceutical services. The sustainability of provision of these services is dependent on appropriate remuneration.

Before the implementation of the Pricing Regulations, much emphasis was placed on the selling of medicine for profit. In many instances, the provision of other services by pharmacists was cross-subsidised by the profit from the sale of medicine. This, however, contributed to the lack of clarity and transparency in the pricing of medicines. While the dispensing fee for medicines is regulated by the Medicines and Related Substances Control Act, the Pharmacy Council is authorised by the Pharmacy Act to make rules as to the services for which a pharmacist may levy a fee, and to give guidance on the implementation of these rules.

The focus has, therefore, now shifted from the price of medicine to the rendering of professional services by pharmacists to members of the public. The President of the South African Pharmacy Council, Mr Bada Pharasi, says: “The public has the right to expect pharmacists to apply their professional skills and knowledge when dispensing medicines or when providing other professional services. It is equally clear that pharmacists must be remunerated appropriately. The pharmacist is paid either by the patient or by third party payers such as medical schemes. The Pharmacy Council has, in its usual

responsible manner; formulated rules for levying fees for professional services which may or may not be linked to the dispensing of a medicine.”

Pharmacists have unique professional abilities and expertise, which contribute towards improving the health of the people of this country. By application of the *Rules relating to services for which a pharmacist may levy a fee and the guidelines for levying such a fee*, the sustainability of pharmacy will be supported so that pharmacists will be able to continue to play their vital role in the community.

ends

ISSUED BY:

The South African Pharmacy Council in the interest of public health, wellness, public education and the rational use of medicines in South Africa.