

**Dispensing medication of incorrect strength  
(16HDC01764, 27 June 2017)**

*Pharmacist ~ Pharmacy ~ Dispensing medication ~ Self check ~ Professional standards ~ Right 4(2)*

A man was prescribed 67 tablets of Sinemet 25/100 to be taken once daily for one week, and then one tablet to be taken twice daily for one month. This was the first time he had been prescribed Sinemet.

A pharmacist processed the man's prescription incorrectly in the dispensary computer system, and generated a label for Sinemet 50/200 (a higher dose than prescribed). The pharmacist selected the medication from the pharmacy shelf in accordance with the incorrect label and did not check the medication against the prescription. The pharmacist then failed to perform a self check of the medication against the prescription before giving it to the man and dispensed 50/200 Sinemet to the man instead of the 25/100 prescribed. The pharmacist also failed to think critically about the significance of Sinemet being a new medication for the man (new patients are usually started at a low dose).

It was held that the pharmacist failed to act in accordance with professional standards and breached Right 4(2).

As recommended by HDC, the pharmacy conducted a review of its dispensary processes, in particular the arrangement of medications on the dispensary shelves, and informed HDC that staff members are now inducted with its SOPs as part of the induction process for new staff members.

It was also recommended that over a period of one month the pharmacy randomly audit its staff compliance with its SOPs for dispensing and checking medications, handling customer complaints, and dispensing errors, and provide HDC with the outcome of the audit.

In accordance with the recommendation in the provisional report, the pharmacist familiarised himself with the pharmacy's SOPs, contacted the New Zealand College of Pharmacists at the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand for the purpose of enrolling in the "Practical Dispensing Assessment" course, and provided a letter of apology to the man.