

Labelling - Image of a Professionally Run Pharmacy

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Labels were extensively employed in the not too distant past when the compounding of mixtures, powders, ointments and pills formed the day-to-day occupation of the pharmacist. The use of labels has gradually declined with the dispensing of mainly proprietary medicines.

Labels that are neatly written and carefully displayed on the container, and packages of proprietary medicines, strengthens the patient's confidence in the preparation and in the pharmacist.

The Medical and Kindred Profession Ordinance 16 Cap 51 of the Dispensaries (Licensing) Regulations 1984 which apply to the labelling of containers and packages of medicinal products state that:

1. All medicinals should be properly labelled.
2. For the purpose of this regulation proper labelling should include the expiry date, where in accordance with good pharmacy practice such date is indicated.

Pharmacists Responsibility in Relation to Labelling

The patient or a distracted and worried parent or relative will remember very little of what he hears in a doctor's clinic or he may remember them incorrectly. Much advice given verbally by the pharmacist is soon forgotten. The patient needs to have the instruction in writing. By proper labelling the pharmacists can give the products they sell a unique added value in the form of advice.

Advantages of Proper Labelling

- the writing of labels serves as an added check for the pharmacist
- gives more individual attention to each patient
- prevents confusion when the patient is receiving several medicaments
- no other record of the treatment may be available to a doctor called to see another doctor's patient
- encourages patient to understand his treatment
- increases patient compliance.

PROPER LABELLING

1. Name of Preparation followed by the strength, form and the quantity of drug dispensed.
2. Directions for use.
3. Patient's name.
4. Prescription number.
5. Date on which medicine is dispensed.
6. Name and address of pharmacy.
7. Expiry date.
8. The route of administration in the case of pessaries, suppositories, nasal spray and drops.
9. If the product is an embrocation, liniment, lotion, liquid antiseptic or other liquid preparation or gel and is for external application, with the words "For External Use Only".
10. 'Keep out of reach of Children'. This was introduced in England in July 1979. This does not apply to medicinal products which are:
 - i. in small containers or strip packs.
 - ii. confectionary on a general sale list bearing no recommendation other than for coughs, colds or nasal congestion.
11. Storage conditions to ensure full potency throughout the period of treatment.
12. Warning of possible side effects.

Source of Information about Drugs

The sources of information about drugs to the patient are many, yet many of these sources have their limitations. These sources include:—

1. Doctor
2. Other patients
3. Mass Media
4. Pharmacist
5. Labelling.

The most readily available source of information to the patient is the label on the container and package. Special instructions are necessary for individual preparations. (See Table 1).

TABLE 1 — INSTRUCTIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL PREPARATIONS

Instruction	Preparation
1. May cause drowsiness (for children preparations)	e.g. antihistaminic syrups, cough syrup, diazepam syrup, amitriptyline syrup.
2. May cause drowsiness — if affected do not drive or operate machinery, avoid alcoholic drink	e.g. antihistamines, sedatives, hypnotics, tricyclic antidepressants, some antihypertensives, codeine, some antiepileptics, some antiemetics, some muscle relaxants.
3. Avoid alcohol	e.g. antidiabetic drugs, insulin, metroxidazole (due to flushing).
4. Do not take antacids at the same time as medicament. To be taken three hours apart	enteric coated tablets granule preparations, tetracyclines.
5. Do not take iron preparation or milk at the same time as medicament. To be taken 2 hours apart	e.g. tetracyclines, penicillamine.
6. Do not stop taking medicament unless advised by doctor	e.g. drugs whose therapeutic effect is slow e.g. antihypertensive drugs that if withdrawn may cause serious reactions e.g. steroids, heart preparations, beta-blockers, contraceptive pill, allupirinol, drugs that are immediately beneficial but the whole course has to be taken e.g. antibiotics. e.g. amidarone, azopropazone, thiazides, frusemide, protryptilene, nalidixic acid, Moduretic. e.g. anticoagulents, patients suffering from gastric ulcers. Uricosuric agents e.g. Probenic, sulphopyrazole.
7. Avoid exposure of skin to light	Effervescent powders and tablets.
8. Avoid asperin preparation	Antraquinons; phenolphthalein (e.g. Agarol, Alophen, senna); triamterene; levolopa, refampin, iron preparation; phenytoin, pyridium, metronidazole.
9. Dissolve or mix with water	ether, alcohol, acetone; pharmaceutical aerosols.
10. Colouring of urine or faeces	e.g. glyceryl trinitrate Angised).
11. Keep away from flames	e.g. drugs for treating migraine; anti-inflammatory drugs.
12. Dissolve under tongue. Discard eight weeks after opening	e.g. anti-inflammatory drugs, indomethacin, aspirin, codeine; antiasthmatics; iron preparations; pivampicillin, nitrofurantoin, griseofulyin.
13. Do not take more than . . . a day	ampicillin, erythromycin, tetracycline, nitronidazole; appetite suppressants, enzyme preparations, antacids, Peritrate; Persantin.
14. To be taken with food	e.g. antiseptic lozenges; antacid tabs, Mintezol tabs; calcium gluconate.
15. Take 1 hr. before food	e.g. in the elderly to avoid danger of tablets sticking in the oesophagus; co-trimoxazole; methylcellulose.
16. To be sucked or chewed	e.g. steroid creams.
17. To be taken with plenty of water	
18. To be applied sparingly	

It is not intended to write an essay on instructions on the dispensing container or package. However, writing one or two of these instructions will help the patient to comply better and can avoid serious consequences

Obviously writing some instructions on the dispensing container is time consuming and the introduction of a dispensing fee will then have more sense. No profession gives advices and time without financial return—pharmacy should not be an exception.