

# Fraud alert

## Prescription fraud during the Covid-19 pandemic

Fraudulent prescription forms can be used to obtain controlled drugs and other high-value medicines either for illegitimate personal use, or for the purpose of selling them on. We have been made aware of a recent fraud trend resulting from the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Caused by the restrictions on international movement, there appears to be a current failure to meet the demand in the illicit drugs market. As a consequence, we have seen an increase in attempts to procure prescription medication through the use of false FP10s and false email accounts being set up in the name of genuine doctors. There have also been cases where a fraudulent amendment was made to a prescription and then the amendment was initialled to make it look like the GP had made the change.

A forged or fraudulent prescription can be a genuine FP10 form which:

- has been stolen;
- has been altered by someone other than an authorised prescriber (for example to increase the quantity or dose, or to add additional items);
- is not signed by an authorised prescriber; or
- it could be a fake prescription form.

What to look out for:

- All prescription forms have serial numbers. An alert may have been issued to look out for prescriptions with particular numbers. Pharmacies can also check with NHS Business Services Authority to find out if a prescription is from a batch reported missing;
- Consider the time intervals within which prescriptions must be presented for dispensing;
- Alterations that have been seen include:
  - Overwriting both printed and handwritten items on prescriptions;
  - Overwriting the prescriber's signature; and
  - Use of amateur type-setting kits to print onto stolen prescription.

- The colour of genuine FP10s are deliberately hard to copy, so counterfeit forms tend to stand out.
- Are the drug names spelt correctly and are the quantities and directions logical?
- Pharmacies tend to know the signatures of the prescribers local to the pharmacy. If the signature is not known and there are concerns, are there other examples of it in the current month's prescriptions?

If you have any suspicions or concerns about prescription forms being fraudulently used, you should report this to your Counter Fraud team, their contact details can be found over the page. **All reports are treated in confidence and you have the option to report anonymously.** When reporting, it is important to include as much essential information as possible, including:

- date/time of incident, and as much detail as possible regarding the place where the incident occurred;
- serial number(s) of the prescription form(s); and
- details of who may have allegedly fraudulently used the prescription form(s), and how.

## For further information contact:

**Erin Sims**  
Associate Director

**LCFS**

07800 617 456

[erin.sims@rsmuk.com](mailto:erin.sims@rsmuk.com)

**Kate Harrington-Stillwell**  
Senior Consultant

**LCFS**

07778 862 713

[kate.harrington-stillwell@rsmuk.com](mailto:kate.harrington-stillwell@rsmuk.com)

**Kasia Gruszka**  
Senior Consultant

**LCFS**

07436 268 597

[kasia.gruszka@rsmuk.com](mailto:kasia.gruszka@rsmuk.com)

You can also report concerns of suspected fraud to the NHS Counter Fraud Authority on 0800 028 4060 or through their reporting form <https://cfa.nhs.uk/reportfraud> If there are concerns that are covered by NHS England, the NHS Counter Fraud Authority can share the information for their investigation locally.

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