

Ms N, Phar25/639P

Charge

A panel of the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (the Tribunal) convened on 25 August 2025 to hear the disciplinary charge laid by a Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) of the Pharmacy Council of New Zealand (the Council) against a health practitioner.

The charge is summarised below and alleged that the Pharmacist:

1. While employed at a community pharmacy, stole certain medicines, including Zopiclone and lorazepam for personal use and;
2. Supplied prescription medicine, Metformin (500mg tablet), from the dispensary stock to a colleague without a prescription.

Background

On 18 October 2023, [Ms N] was working at the pharmacy. [Ms N] was scheduled to (and did) cease work at the pharmacy the following day.

At approximately 5:00pm, when [Ms N] and a trainee technician were the only staff on-site, [Ms N] lifted a medication disposal bin onto a work bench in the Pharmacy's dispensary. [Ms N] uplifted medicines that had been discarded into the disposal bin and placed this on a dispensing bench behind a grey box. The grey box was obscured from CCTV cameras positioned in the Pharmacy's dispensary.

While stationed at the dispensary bench, behind the grey box, [Ms N] cut medication foil and repackaged the discarded medicines into a new skillet. From the discarded medicines, [Ms N] set aside 50 paracetamol 500mg tablets and 12 vitamin D3 tablets. From the dispensing stock, [Ms N] transferred 65 7.5mg tablets of zopiclone from a dispensing bottle into an empty bottle.

From the dispensing stock, [Ms N] placed a bottle of Lorazepam containing 123 1 mg tablets behind the grey box.

[Ms N] transferred the stolen medicines placed behind the grey box into her handbag.

All the stolen medicines were taken for [Ms N]'s personal use.

Before leaving work, [Ms N] supplied the trainee technician with an unspecified quantity of metformin 500 mg tablets, without a valid prescription, taken from Pharmacy stock. [Ms N] took the metformin from the dispensary shelf and halved the tablets. She put the halved tablets into a small bottle in a brown bag and handed the bag to the trainee technician.

The medicines were noted as unaccounted for following a stocktake on 3 November 2023. CCTV footage disclosed [Ms N]'s actions.

On 16 February 2024, [Ms N] returned the medicines, except for one zopiclone 7.5 mg tablet and one lorazepam 1 mg tablet, to another pharmacy for destruction.

Finding

The Tribunal found [Ms N] liable on account of malpractice under s 100(1)(a) of the Act and conduct liable to bring discredit to the profession under s 100(1)(b).

Penalty

The Tribunal ordered:

- Censure
- The disclosure of the Tribunal's decision to any employer or potential employer for a period of 3 years.
- The practitioner is not permitted to work in sole charge practice or sole charge of a pharmacy for a period of 1 year.
- The practitioner must undertake a 12-month mentorship with a person agreed between the practitioner and Pharmacy Council. With monthly reporting that requires the practitioner to engage in a process of self-reflection as to the cause of misconduct and to produce tangible evidence of her engagement in that process.