

Dispensing and In-office Administration: Why are they Different?

The LSBME and other organizations have received several phone calls requesting clarification on the dispensation of medications as opposed to in-office administration. We thought it would be a good idea to clarify this situation and these terms for physicians, nurses and other prescribers. All bolded or underlined text is our emphasis. One of the key issues in this matter is timing. In-office administration is exactly what it sounds like, as administer is defined in §6503 of the Board's rules on the Dispensation of Medications:

“with respect to a medication provided or dispensed by a physician for use by a patient, the term *administered* means directly or through an agent to give, provide, or supply for **immediate** oral ingestion, insertion, or topical application by the patient, or to insert, apply topically, or inject intravenously, intramuscularly, subcutaneously, intrathecally, or extrathecally.”

This differs from the *dispensing* of medications, controlled and otherwise, which is defined in the same section of the rules:

“with respect to a drug, chemical, medication, or controlled substance, the term *dispense* means to give, provide, or supply for **later** oral ingestion, insertion, application, injection, or other use.”

A substance administered in the premises of a medical office may be administered by a physician, a nurse, or a physician assistant as permitted by law. Unlike office administration, the dispensing rules do not permit delegation of dispensing to another health practitioner or staff member in the office; dispensing must be done by a physician with a dispensing permit, or a pharmacist. This is not to be confused with giving a patient a bonafide sample. A bonafide sample is defined as “a medication, **other than a controlled substance**, packaged by the original manufacturer thereof in such quantity as does not exceed a reasonable therapeutic dosage **and provided at no cost to a physician for administration or dispensation to a patient at no cost to the patient.**”