

MEDIA RELEASE**1 June 2006****IMPORTANT TO PLAN AHEAD WHEN TRAVELLING WITH MEDICINES**

If you intend to travel overseas it is important to plan ahead to take into consideration relevant legal, customs and PBS restrictions on travelling with medicines, according to Nicholas Zwar, Professor of General Practice, Schools of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of NSW, in the latest issue of *Australian Prescriber*.

Each year over 4.4 million Australians depart on short-term trips overseas. Many of these travellers take medicines regularly. Supply, packing and storage are common issues that they must consider before travelling.

“It is important to make sure that they have sufficient quantities of their regular medicines prescribed and dispensed before travelling. Medicines subsidised by the PBS can only be taken or sent out of Australia for personal use and there are legal restrictions on the quantity of PBS drugs that a traveller can take or send overseas” said Professor Zwar.

Travellers should also keep their medicines in their original packaging wherever possible to reduce the risk of difficulty with customs officials on arrival at their destination. A few days' supply of medicines should be carried in hand luggage in case checked bags are delayed.

Travellers should also consider taking relevant documentation about their medicines with them on their trip. “A health summary including any drug allergies and an up-to-date medication list is very helpful for travellers with chronic medical problems. As brand names of medicines vary from country to country, the generic names of the medicines should be included” said Professor Zwar.

The timing of doses should also be considered especially for people taking insulin for diabetes. These people should seek advice from their specialist on adjusting the doses if they are travelling across time zones.

For more information on medicines travellers can contact the NPS *Medicines Line* by telephoning 1300 888 763 between 9am and 6pm Eastern Standard Time (EST) for the cost of a local call (mobile calls may cost more).

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