

**SALE OF MEDICINE THROUGH PRESCRIPTION: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM**

Prepared by:

NUR ATIQAH BINTI MOHD RAZIF (2009657824)

AZLIN ZETI BINTI ZAINAL ABIDIN (2009626396)

DAING NURUL MAHFUZAH BINTI DAING IBRAHIM (2009638104)

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ABSTRACT

Sale of medicine through prescription refers to the right of health care professionals to dispense medicines that have been prescribed by doctors. Dispensing medicines by community pharmacists specifically, has been practiced in many developed countries for reasons such as professionalism; where pharmacists are generally understood to have more extensive knowledge on medicines, accessibility; where many varieties of medicines are accessible giving rights for consumers to choose and right to self-determination; where there is a need for second opinions as patients today are playing more active role in decision making. In Malaysia, there has been continuous discussion on the overlapping of duties between the two professions, however, there are no studies conducted from the legal perspective. The research was achieved through an extensive library and internet research whereby credible information from legal and medical materials such as scholarly papers, statutes and international codes were gathered and examined. The research was also strengthened by cross-sectional interviews which were conducted on 10 health care professionals from around Shah Alam which are of medical and pharmaceutical backgrounds. The data was collected and analyzed through a set of questionnaires which aimed at understanding further the workings of the two health care professionals. Ultimately, the research aimed at finding out whether there is an ideal system of dispensing prescribed medicines.

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CHAPTER ONE

SALE OF MEDICINE THROUGH PRESCRIPTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY BETWEEN MALAYSIA AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the research topic by evaluating the practice of dispensing prescribed medicines in Malaysia and in the United Kingdom. Many international bodies¹ have recognised the role of pharmacists as a separate supplementary body which helps to dispense medicines as well as give additional advises to patients with regard to effects of medicines. However, currently in Malaysia there is an overlapping of duties between doctors and pharmacists with regard to dispensing prescribed medicines where doctors not only prescribe, the also have the right to dispense. Therefore, this research seeks to discover whether this practice is still relevant in today's society or whether the system applied in other developed countries, such as the UK, should be implemented in Malaysia in the near future to provide for a better and improved medical service. This chapter also highlights the objectives of the study as well as the extent of research that will be conducted.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Medicines are substances that are used to treat diseases or illnesses while medicines with “medicinal purpose”, by virtue of *Sale of Drugs Act (Malaysia) 1952*² include those which are used to alleviate, treat, cure, or prevent a disease as well as for general maintenance or promotion of health or wellbeing. The World Health Organization (WHO) has acknowledged that the primary role of pharmacists is to dispense prescription medication.³ Here, dispensing medication through prescription refers to the act of giving,

¹ Such as World Health Organization (WHO) and International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP)

² Sale of Drugs Act 1952 (ACT 368)

³ World Health Organization. *The role of pharmacists in the health care system*. Report of WHO consultative group, New Delhi, India, 13-16 December 1988. Geneva: World Health Organization; 1994