

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS! In New York Pharmacies

You are entitled to certain rights under federal and state law when you go to a pharmacy to fill a prescription. All pharmacies in New York **MUST** do the following:

- ◆ **Label medications in such a way that everyone can read and understand how to take their medicines** and know about potential side effects.
- ◆ **Talk with patients so that they can understand how to take their medicine** and know the potential side effects of their medicines. This can be done by a face-to-face meeting with the pharmacist OR by telephone if the patient is receiving medicine through the mail.
- ◆ **Not discriminate against patients based on race, language or national origin.** This means that pharmacies cannot refuse service or provide poorer service to patients who are not fluent in English.

What should New York pharmacies be doing so that they can meet their legal obligations and better serve patients who do not speak English? All pharmacies **SHOULD** be doing the following:

- ◆ **Translating medicine labels** so that patients can read instructions in their own language. Most pharmacies have computer programs that can translate medication labels.
- ◆ **Counseling patients in a language they can understand and in a culturally sensitive manner.** Pharmacies can hire bilingual pharmacists and pharmacy aides, use in-person interpreters or contract with a telephone interpreting service in order to properly serve patients who do not speak English.
- ◆ **Posting multi-lingual signs on the wall stating that the pharmacy can provide medicine labels in many languages.**
- ◆ **Ask each patient what his or her primary language is** and make a note of that in the patient's record.

If you have had trouble getting medicines at the pharmacy because you do not speak English or do not speak it well, please contact: Nisha Agarwal, 212-244-4664 at New York Lawyers for the Public Interest.



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