

# The Critical Role of Patient Examination in Prescribing

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Jayson Nagpiing

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## Side effects of medication

Dr X who was trained outside of Australia was placed in a rural practice. Despite having fifteen years' experience in his native country, this was a real culture shock and he found it difficult to adjust to practicing in Australia.



On a particularly busy day he saw a patient late in the day who had experienced continuous headaches over a few days. As he was running late, he did not examine the patient and after a brief consultation, he prescribed Codeine Forte.

Apart from that, he advised the patient that if the headaches persisted he should return for a further consultation.

The patient immediately had the script filled, took the medication and while driving home became drowsy and was involved in a car accident.

A claim was made against the doctor for the incurred expenses of the accident on the basis he did not inform the patient of any of the side effects.

When prescribing medication always examine the patient thoroughly and warn of any possible side effects and certainly advise them of whether it is inappropriate to drive a motor vehicle or operate machinery. Always alert patients to any warnings on the medicine. Always document your discussions in the patients record.

In this case Dr X's failure to examine appropriately, provide a detailed informed consent including warning of risks, and poor record keeping may have exposed him to allegations of medical negligence and/or professional misconduct.

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