

To Diagnose, Prescribe and Dispense: Whose Right Is It? The Ongoing Struggle Between Pharmacy and Medicine in South Africa

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The aim of this article is to explore the conflict between pharmacists' attempts to extend their discretionary powers to prescribe and doctors' quest to engage in dispensing of medications. Adopting a global perspective, the article analyses issues such as occupational task boundaries, dominance, jurisdiction and autonomy of the professions. It also contemplates the role of the state in relation to these issues in the current South African transitional context. To gain an in-depth insight into this complex issue, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were employed. The current scenario, as presented in this article, deals with a double bid by pharmacy in South Africa to emulate what has been historically and globally, successfully done by medicine. On the one hand, their pursuit to expand their discretionary powers to prescribe is an infringement on another profession's task domain and, on the other hand, their current success to curb doctors' rights to dispense medications is an attempt to gain control over what they consider to be their professional jurisdiction.

Key Words: dispensing doctors • occupational boundaries • pharmacists • professional autonomy • professional dominance

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