

# Standards of conduct, ethics and performance

July 2012





The General Pharmaceutical Council is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales.

This document sets out the standards of conduct, ethics and performance that pharmacy professionals must follow. Pharmacy professionals are pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are registered with us.

It is important that you meet our standards and that you are able to practise safely and effectively. Your conduct will be judged against the standards and failure to comply could put your registration at risk. If someone raises concerns about you we will consider these standards when deciding if we need to take any action.

The work of a pharmacy professional can take many forms and you may work in different settings, including clinical practice, education, research and industry.

If you are a pharmacy professional these standards apply to you, even if you do not treat, care for or interact directly with patients and the public.

As well as standards of conduct, ethics and performance, we publish other standards which you need to consider together with these standards.

To help you to understand these standards, we have published a glossary of terms. We will also publish guidance to advise you on what you will need to do to meet these standards.

The glossary and our guidance can be found on our website at [www.pharmacyregulation.org](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org)

## **The seven principles**

As a pharmacy professional, you must:

1. Make patients your first concern
2. Use your professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public
3. Show respect for others
4. Encourage patients and the public to participate in decisions about their care
5. Develop your professional knowledge and competence
6. Be honest and trustworthy
7. Take responsibility for your working practices.

## Meeting the standards

We do not dictate how you should meet our standards. Each standard can normally be met in more than one way and the way in which you meet our standards may change over time.

The standards are of equal importance.

You are professionally accountable for your practice. This means that you are responsible for what you do or do not do, no matter what advice or direction your manager or another professional gives you. You must use your professional judgement when deciding on a course of action and you should use our standards as a basis when making those decisions.

You may be faced with conflicting professional or legal responsibilities. In these circumstances you must consider all possible courses of action and the risks and benefits associated with each one to decide what is in the best interests of patients and the public.

# 1 Make patients your first concern

The care, well-being and safety of patients are at the heart of professional practice. They must always be your first concern. Even if you do not have direct contact with patients your decisions or behaviour can still affect their care or safety.

You must:

- 1.1 Make sure the services you provide are safe and of acceptable quality
- 1.2 Take action to protect the well-being of patients and the public
- 1.3 Promote the health of patients and the public
- 1.4 Get all the information you require to assess a person's needs in order to give the appropriate treatment and care
- 1.5 If you need to, refer patients to other health or social-care professionals, or to other relevant organisations
- 1.6 Do your best to provide medicines and other professional services safely and when patients need them
- 1.7 Be satisfied that patients or their carers know how to use their medicines
- 1.8 Keep full and accurate records of the professional services you provide in a clear and legible form
- 1.9 Make sure you have access to the facilities, equipment and resources you need to provide your professional services safely and effectively
- 1.10 Organise regular reviews, audits and risk assessments to protect patient and public safety and to improve your professional services.

## 2 Use your professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public

Balancing the needs of individuals with those of society as a whole is essential to professional practice.

You must:

- 2.1 Consider and act in the best interests of individual patients and the public
- 2.2 Make sure that your professional judgement is not affected by personal or organisational interests, incentives, targets or similar measures
- 2.3 Make the best use of the resources available to you
- 2.4 Be prepared to challenge the judgement of your colleagues and other professionals if you have reason to believe that their decisions could affect the safety or care of others
- 2.5 In an emergency, consider all available options and do your best to provide care and reduce risks to patients and the public.

### 3 Show respect for others

Showing respect for other people is essential in forming and maintaining professional relationships.

You must:

- 3.1 Recognise diversity and respect people's cultural differences and their right to hold their personal values and beliefs
- 3.2 Treat people politely and considerately
- 3.3 Not unfairly discriminate against people. Make sure your views about a person's lifestyle, religion or belief, race, gender reassignment, identity, sex and sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status or any other factors, do not affect how you provide your professional services
- 3.4 Make sure that if your religious or moral beliefs prevent you from providing a service, you tell the relevant people or authorities and refer patients and the public to other providers
- 3.5 Respect and protect people's dignity and privacy. Take all reasonable steps to prevent accidental disclosure or unauthorised access to confidential information. Never disclose confidential information without consent unless required to do so by the law or in exceptional circumstances
- 3.6 Get consent for the professional services you provide and the patient information you use

- 3.7 Use information you obtain in the course of your professional practice only for the purposes you were given it, or where the law says you can
- 3.8 Make sure you provide the appropriate levels of privacy for patient consultations
- 3.9 Maintain proper professional boundaries in your relationships with patients and others that you come into contact with during the course of your professional practice and take special care when dealing with vulnerable people.

## 4 Encourage patients and the public to participate in decisions about their care

Patients and the public have a right to be involved in decisions about their treatment and care. This needs effective communication. You should encourage patients and the public to work in partnership with you and others to manage their needs.

You must:

- 4.1 Communicate effectively with patients and the public and take reasonable steps to meet their communication needs
- 4.2 Work in partnership with patients and the public, their carers and other professionals to manage their treatment and care. Listen to patients and the public and respect their choices
- 4.3 Explain the options available to patients and the public, including the risks and benefits, to help them make informed decisions. Make sure the information you give is impartial, relevant and up to date
- 4.4 Respect a person's right to refuse to receive a professional service
- 4.5 Make sure that information is appropriately shared with other health and socialcare professionals involved in the care of the patient
- 4.6 Consider and take steps, when possible, to address those factors that may be preventing or deterring patients from getting or taking their treatment
- 4.7 If a person cannot legally make decisions about their care, make sure that any service you provide is in line with the appropriate legal requirements.

## 5 Develop your professional knowledge and competence

Up-to-date and relevant professional knowledge and skills are essential for safe and effective practice. You must ensure that your knowledge, skills and performance are of a high standard, up to date and relevant to your field of practice at all stages of your professional working life.

You must:

- 5.1 Recognise the limits of your professional competence. Practise only in those areas in which you are competent to do so and refer to others if you need to
- 5.2 Maintain and improve the quality of your practice by keeping your knowledge and skills up to date and relevant to your role and responsibilities
- 5.3 Apply your knowledge and skills appropriately to your practice
- 5.4 Learn from assessments, appraisals and reviews of your professional performance and undertake further education and training if necessary
- 5.5 Undertake and keep up-to-date evidence of your continuing professional development.

## 6 Be honest and trustworthy

Patients and the public put their trust in pharmacy professionals. You must behave in a way that justifies this trust and maintains the reputation of your profession.

You must:

- 6.1 Act with honesty and integrity to maintain public trust and confidence in your profession
- 6.2 Not abuse your professional position or exploit the vulnerability or lack of knowledge of others
- 6.3 Avoid conflicts of interest and declare any personal or professional interests you have. Do not ask for or accept gifts, rewards or hospitality that may affect, or be seen to affect, your professional judgement
- 6.4 Be accurate and impartial when you teach and when you provide or publish information. Do not mislead or make claims that you have no evidence for or cannot justify
- 6.5 Meet accepted standards of personal and professional conduct
- 6.6 Comply with legal and professional requirements and accepted guidance on professional practice

- 6.7 Keep to your commitments, agreements and arrangements to provide professional services
- 6.8 Respond honestly, openly and politely to complaints and criticism
- 6.9 Promptly tell us, your employer and all relevant authorities about anything that may mean you are not fit to practise or that may damage the reputation of the pharmacy professions. This includes ill health that affects your ability to practise, criminal convictions and findings of other regulatory bodies or organisations.



## 7 Take responsibility for your working practices

Working in a team is an important part of professional practice and relies on respect, co-operation and communication between colleagues from your own and other professions. When you work as part of a team you are accountable for your own decisions and behaviour and any work you supervise.

You must:

- 7.1 Practise only if you are fit to do so
- 7.2 Make sure that you and everyone you are responsible for have the language skills to communicate and work effectively with colleagues
- 7.3 Contribute to the development, education and training of colleagues and students, and share your knowledge, skills and expertise
- 7.4 Take responsibility for all work you do or are responsible for. Make sure that you delegate tasks only to people who are trained to do them, or who are being trained
- 7.5 Make sure it is clear who is responsible for providing a particular service when you are working in a team
- 7.6 Be satisfied that appropriate standard operating procedures are in place and are being followed
- 7.7 Make sure that you keep to your legal and professional responsibilities and that your workload or working conditions do not present a risk to patient care or public safety

- 7.8 Make sure that your actions do not stop others from keeping to their legal and professional responsibilities, or present a risk to patient care or public safety
- 7.9 Make sure that all your work, or work that you are responsible for, is covered by appropriate professional indemnity cover
- 7.10 Make sure that there is an effective complaints procedure where you work and follow it at all times
- 7.11 Make the relevant authority aware of any policies, systems, working conditions, or the actions, professional performance or health of others if they may affect patient care or public safety. If something goes wrong or if someone reports a concern to you, make sure that you deal with it appropriately
- 7.12 Co-operate with any investigations into your or another healthcare professional's fitness to practise and keep to undertakings you give or any restrictions placed on your practice because of an investigation.



## More information

If you would like copies of this document in Welsh, please go to [www.pharmacyregulation.org/standards/conduct-ethics-and-performance](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/standards/conduct-ethics-and-performance) where you can download a PDF. If you are seeking this document in other formats, please contact our communications team:  
Email: [communications@pharmacyregulation.org](mailto:communications@pharmacyregulation.org)

If you have any questions or comments about the content of the standards, please contact our Standards Team:

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We have also produced guidance on topics that you may find useful:  
[\*\*www.pharmacyregulation.org/standards/guidance\*\*](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/standards/guidance)

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