

Commission on Education and Training for Patient Safety
Health Education England
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12th September 2015

To: Professor Sir Norman Williams, chair and Sir Keith Pearson, vice chair, Commission on Education and Training for Patient Safety

Request for evidence – Commission on Education and Training for Patient Safety

Our role

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in Great Britain. Our role, as set out in legislation, is to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public who use pharmaceutical services in England, Scotland and Wales. We do this through a range of functions including setting and upholding standards for pharmacy professionals, setting standards for initial education and training of pharmacy professionals, as well as standards for registered pharmacies.

Working with HEE

There are a wide range of organisations involved in education and training of health professionals and a key challenge is to ensure organisations such as HEE and professional regulators like GPhC work together effectively. We are pleased that our work to agree a Memorandum of Understanding with HEE, along with established regular contact with senior staff in both organisations, has helped to facilitate joint working on strategic priorities such as those identified by the Commission.

The focus of the Commission

The Commission's work to help HEE ensure that the education and training of healthcare professionals has an increased focus on delivering safe, dignified and compassionate care appears very much aligned with the GPhC's own strategic priorities.

Our strategic plan 2015-18¹ sets out the GPhC's commitment to focus on the needs of patients who are cared for by pharmacy professionals and receive advice, services and care from registered pharmacies. At the heart of our approach is providing a regulatory framework within which professionalism can flourish and ensuring the delivery of compassionate and patient-centred care.

The GPhC has a key role to play in helping pharmacy professionals and the pharmacy sector as a whole to improve quality, of which safety is a key element. We aim to carry out our functions efficiently and effectively so that we can contribute to improving pharmacy by using standards to 'raise the bar' over time to promote improvement. Setting and upholding standards for education and training is a key part of this, but only one of the levers we have, as the pharmacy regulator.

Our response

Your letter, dated 24 August, raises five large and important questions. Given the limited time available to respond, we have restricted our response to broad themes. We would, however, be very happy to expand in more detail at a later point if you would find that helpful.

1. Is your organisation active in patient safety improvement and if so what are your priorities?

As the regulator for pharmacy professionals and registered pharmacies, patient safety sits at the heart of what we do. Our statutory functions are all designed to contribute, in different ways to patient safety. Our three year strategic plan (which is updated each year) sets out our approach in more detail.

¹ http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/gphc_strategic_plan_2015-18.pdf

Arguably one of the most influential roles we can carry out in support of improved patient safety is ensuring the standards we set (for individual registrants, for the initial education and training of professionals, as well as for registered pharmacies – many of which are also training establishments) promote key themes which contribute to patient safety and high quality, compassionate and person-centred care. We recently launched a national conversation with patients, the public and pharmacy professionals about what patient-centred professionalism means to them². The outcomes of this conversation will be published shortly and will inform the GPhC's future regulatory work, and in particular the review of its standards of conduct, ethics and performance.

We are currently reviewing each of these sets of standards which we hope will, in addition to making clear our expectations as the pharmacy regulator, contribute to improvements in culture and person-centred professionalism. We note the four key themes you have identified: raise and respond to concerns; service improvement science; mandatory training; and human factors. Our recent Council Paper, *Embedding learning from the Mid-Staffordshire Public Inquiry*³, provides further background to key workstreams to take forward important themes particularly around raising concerns. In addition our regulation of pharmacies, including both setting standards and inspecting pharmacies is a key opportunity for us to encourage improvement in patient safety.

2. What do you think about current patient safety education and training of healthcare staff?

Education and training of professionals inevitably needs to develop over time and must be rooted in the reality of the needs of patients and the public, as well as the NHS and other employers. We are currently reviewing our education standards and through this work, as well as other initiatives to gather data and information about the quality of education and training, we hope to build a better picture about how our standards may need to change.

²

http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/patient_centred_professionalism_in_pharmacy_april_2015.pdf

³ <http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/10-september-2015>

The first standard in our current standards for the initial education and training is focused on patient and public safety and reflects our view that patient safety is fundamental to the education and training of all healthcare professionals.

3. What are the main barriers for healthcare staff in ensuring safe care and what can be done to overcome these barriers?

There are a wide range of possible barriers for healthcare staff in ensuring safe care. These are often complex and identifying both evidence and a suitable response is a significant challenge. From a pharmacy perspective, we will need to consider issues such as how to access and analyse patient safety information including the particular context in both hospital and community pharmacy.

Other issues we think are critical include the need to focus not just on registered professionals – pharmacists and pharmacy technicians – but the whole pharmacy team including non-registered staff. We will continue to use inspections to build up evidence about the particular context of pharmacy and the extent to which pharmacy staff are able to make decisions in the best interests of their patients and others accessing pharmacy services. We will be considering this as part of our review of standards for registered pharmacies⁴.

4. What are the main challenges to replicating and scaling –up best practice to improve patient safety?

Within a pharmacy context, the challenges differ from sector to sector and as a result the levers will also vary. From our perspective, there are a wide range of opportunities for us to promote patient safety. One of our strategic aims is to use ‘the knowledge gained from our regulatory services and from our work with others in order to promote improvement in the quality of pharmacy care and services⁵’. This sets out a range of initiatives to promote patient safety across the sector. Examples of how we intend to implement this in future include publication of inspection reports and the move towards publishing increasing amounts of data and information about what we learn through our regulatory work.

⁴ <https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/standards/standards-registered-pharmacies>

⁵ http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/gphc_strategic_plan_2015-18.pdf

5. What are the main patient safety priorities for education and training in the future?
Our strategic plan sets out our organisation's key priorities and how we can use these to promote patient safety through our work. Our review of education and training of the pharmacy team provides a key opportunity to listen to our stakeholders and develop a shared view about the key issues affecting pharmacy education and training and, included in this, the key patient safety priorities.

Our preliminary views are set out in our discussion paper: Tomorrow's pharmacy team⁶.

We continue to support working together to protect and promote patient safety. If I can be of any further assistance, or you would like to discuss any of the matters covered in this letter, please let me know.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh Simpson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a horizontal line.

Hugh Simpson
Director of Strategy

On behalf of Duncan Rudkin, Chief Executive and Registrar

⁶ http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/tomorrows_pharmacy_team_june_2015.pdf