

Joint statement from the Chief Executive of the General Medical Council, the Chief Executive of the General Pharmaceutical Council and the Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland.

Following recent claims that patients and the public have been inappropriately influenced by health professionals when making decisions about where they access services, including flu vaccinations and dispensing of prescriptions, the General Medical Council (GMC), General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and the Pharmaceutical Society of NI have published the following statement.

Patient choice and team work at the heart of NHS service provision

Doctors and pharmacy professionals must work in partnership with patients, with each other, and as part of a wider multi-disciplinary team to provide high quality care to patients. Care of patients must always be the first priority and access to services such as flu vaccinations should not be affected by commercial interests.

The GMC, GPhC and the Pharmaceutical Society NI are clear that pharmacy professionals and doctors must support informed decision making by patients.

This includes:

- Being open and honest at all times about where patients can receive NHS services, for example where their medicines are dispensed and flu vaccinations are given.
- Not allowing any interests they have, financial or otherwise, to affect the way they treat, refer or commission services for patients.
- Being open and honest about any potential conflicts of interest – this is vital to make sure that the trust and confidence patients have in doctors and pharmacy professionals is maintained.
- Ensuring that the information published when advertising services is factual and does not exploit patients' vulnerability or lack of medical knowledge.

We have been working with a number of organisations to make sure that doctors or pharmacy professionals are not inappropriately influencing patients' choices. Anyone who has a specific concern about this should contact NHS England or their local Health Board in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We work closely with the NHS in each part of the UK and there is a clear process whereby they can refer any concerns to us if they consider our standards have not been met by individual health professionals.

Evidence of inappropriate payments or attempts to deceive patients would raise questions about the professionalism of doctors and pharmacists, and could result in investigations by the GMC, GPhC and the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

CEO signatures (in alphabetical order)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Niall Dickson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Niall Dickson
Chief Executive and Registrar
General Medical Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Trevor Patterson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Trevor Patterson
Chief Executive
Pharmaceutical Society NI

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Rudkin', enclosed in a thin black rectangular box.

Duncan Rudkin
Chief Executive and Registrar
General Pharmaceutical Council

The General Medical Council helps to protect patients and improve medical education and practice in the UK by setting standards for students and doctors. The GMC supports them in achieving and exceeding those standards, and takes action when they are not met.

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the professional regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in GB. In addition, the GPhC sets and upholds standards for registered pharmacies in GB.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland is the professional regulator for pharmacists in Northern Ireland. In addition, the Pharmaceutical Society NI sets standards for registered pharmacies in Northern Ireland.