

# Tackling the health of Scotland's people

In this, the fourth article in our series about the new community pharmacy contract in Scotland, Clare Bellingham outlines the public health service

Public health is ingrained in community pharmacy. Whether it is a few words on smoking cessation, handing out a leaflet on managing blood pressure or providing the contact details of a local self-help group, public health is just one of those things community pharmacists do every day.

The new pharmacy contract in Scotland formalises this role. The public health service (PHS) is one of the four core services within the new contract and it will begin this summer. The PHS, as it stands now, is just the start: the aim is for it to be expanded in the coming years to maximise pharmacists' role in improving public health.

## Health promotion

The PHS can be divided into three sections:

- Adopting a health-promoting philosophy
- Providing health-promoting activities
- Creating a health-promoting environment

The service aims to promote both health and self-care. Central to the PHS is making the most of the network of community pharmacies to deliver a uniform public health message.

**Health-promoting philosophy** Adopting a health-promoting philosophy is self-explanatory. It means that every time a member of the pharmacy team speaks to a patient, he or she needs to consider whether health promotion advice should be provided.

This philosophy includes not just conventional healthy lifestyle advice, but also promoting safe use of medicines and encouraging self care. It is a philosophy that needs to be adopted by both pharmacists and



## Providing opportunistic advice is one way of promoting public health

pharmacy staff. And it includes advice offered when supplying a prescription medicine and what is said during medicines sales.

**Health-promoting activities** The provision of health promoting activities can be divided into two sections: supporting national

campaigns and offering opportunistic advice on a day-to-day basis. Four national campaigns will be arranged annually in which all pharmacies will have to participate. Each campaign will last for six weeks and supporting display materials will be provided by the NHS. Topics will include national priorities such as winter health, oral health, smoking cessation, sun safety and men's health.

**Health-promoting environment** In order to create a health promoting environment, every community pharmacy will need to have an area that will be used to display health promotion and health education materials. Additionally, pharmacies can opt to use their windows or shop frontage to provide health improvement messages. Standard display units will be provided on the themes of the four national health promotion campaigns.

Also within this section is a new requirement that pharmacies cannot sell products that might be a danger to health from the registered premises. This includes tobacco products, alcohol and products that mask alcohol or drug consumption. It also states that sugar-free medicines should be promoted.

## Additional services

Further opportunities for public health lie within locally negotiated "additional" services, which form a second tier above the new contract's core services. Two of these additional services fit into the public health agenda: provision of emergency hormonal contraception and smoking cessation services. National benchmark specifications and tariffs are being drawn up for additional services.

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