



**Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society
of Great Britain**

Consultation on a Code of Ethics for Pharmacy Technicians

This draft Code of Ethics for Pharmacy Technicians was developed as part of the work to enable the Society to register Pharmacy Technicians.

It is necessary because the Society will need to have a set of standards that pharmacy technicians on the Society's register will be expected to meet. Once agreed, the new code of ethics is likely to mean that the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK's current code of practice is also reviewed before 1 January 2007.

It was agreed by the Society's Law and Ethics Committee to develop a separate code of ethics for pharmacy technicians, rather than trying to adjust the Code of Ethics for Pharmacists.

The Law and Ethics Committee set up a small working party to carry out the detailed drafting. The working party involved members of the Society's Council and two members of the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK.

The Code of Ethics for Pharmacy Technician largely mirrors the

pharmacists' Code of Ethics. This is to be expected, because we would expect pharmacy technicians to meet the same levels of behaviour as pharmacists.

The Society and the Association are now seeking comments on the draft Code of Ethics for Pharmacy Technicians. It is obviously important for pharmacy technicians to have their say on the draft code, since it will primarily affect them.

We are undertaking a three-month consultation period, after which we will consider the responses that we have had and make any necessary redrafting.

Some points may need clarification. We have provided footnotes where necessary to explain some of the issues. If you would like further clarification please contact David Pruce, Director of Practice and Quality Improvement at the Society (tel 020 75722358; e-mail david.pruce@rpsgb.org) or Darren Leech, President, Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK (tel 01480 416143 [office hours]; e-mail president@aptuk.org).

Draft Code of Ethics for Pharmacy Technicians

Part 1: Key responsibilities of a pharmacy technician

- At all times pharmacy technicians must act in the interests of patients and other members of the public and seek to provide the best possible healthcare for the community in partnership with all the health professions. Pharmacy technicians must treat all those who seek professional services with courtesy, respect and confidentiality. Pharmacy technicians must respect patients' rights to participate in decisions about their care and must provide information in a way in which it can be understood.
- Pharmacy technicians must ensure that their knowledge, skills and performance are of high quality, up to date, evidence based and relevant to their field of practice.
- Pharmacy technicians must ensure that they behave with integrity and probity, adhere to accepted standards of personal and professional conduct and do not engage in any behaviour or activity likely to bring the profession of pharmacy into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession.
- A pharmacy technician must not represent himself or herself as a pharmacist.

Part 2: Standards of professional performance

A. Personal responsibilities

Pharmacy technicians' prime concern, irrespective of their sphere of work, must be for the wellbeing and safety of patients and the public. Some roles pharmacy technicians undertake attract specific responsibilities. For example, when pharmacy technicians have managerial responsibilities they must ensure that procedures designed to minimise risks are formulated and applied. Pharmacy technicians providing professional services in any sphere of practice must ensure that their own work procedures are safe and effective.

The public and the profession are entitled to expect that pharmacy technicians providing services will comply with the specific professional responsibilities associated with them and comply with any other accepted codes of practice and statutory requirements applicable to their sphere of practice.

Pharmacy technicians must only work within the limits of their knowledge and expertise and referral to a pharmacist or other appropriate authority¹ must be made where appropriate.

A.1 Pharmacy technicians providing professional services

A pharmacy technician is responsible for their own actions regardless of whether or not they are in a position to control or influence the practice, business or institutional arrangements within which they are practising, and must ensure that:

- they only accept work where they have the requisite skills and fitness for the tasks to be performed. All pharmacy technicians must establish sufficient information about the work to enable an assessment to be made;
- they undertake continuing professional development relevant to their professional duties;

- all activities they undertake are covered by professional indemnity arrangements;
- they do not work in conditions that do not enable them to comply with the key responsibilities of a pharmacy technician;
- the requisite facilities, equipment and materials are accessible to enable the provision of the services to professionally accepted standards;
- if any tasks are to be delegated they are delegated to persons competent to perform them;
- they and other staff work within standard operating procedures where these exist;
- they agree terms and conditions and abide by them;
- they honour commitments to provide professional services unless this is impossible. If they are not able to honour a commitment the pharmacy owner or other responsible person must be informed at the earliest opportunity in order that alternative arrangements may be made;
- they take action to report to the supervising pharmacist or other appropriate authority when they become aware of a suspected drug interaction or adverse drug reaction so that a decision can be made as to the best course of action for the benefit of the patient;
- before accepting employment they disclose any factors which may affect their ability to provide services. Where pharmacy technicians' religious or personal convictions prevent them from providing a service they must not condemn or criticise the patient. They must refer the patient to a pharmacist or pharmacy technician who is able to provide the service. If there is no one able to provide the service, they must advise the patient of alternative sources for the services requested;
- if they become aware that a person has received pharmaceutical care of a standard less than the person had a right to expect, whether or not they are the person responsible, they should provide an explanation of what happened if it is within their competence to do so, or to

- refer to a pharmacist or other appropriate authority for advice;
- they report to the Society concerns that a pharmacist's or pharmacy technician's professional competence or ability to practise may be impaired and put the public at risk.

A.2 Pharmacy technicians who own a pharmacy² and pharmacy technician managers in hospitals, trusts or other fields of practice

Before assuming the role of owner, or manager in a hospital or trust, pharmacy technicians must be satisfied that they are able to comply with the responsibilities set out below. Pharmacy technician owners or managers in hospitals, trusts or other fields of practice have a personal professional responsibility:

- to ensure the observance of all legal and professional requirements in relation to pharmaceutical aspects of the business. They are responsible for ensuring that a retrievable record of the pharmacist taking responsibility for the provision of each pharmacy service is maintained and that an identifiable pharmacist is accountable for all activities of non-pharmacists involved in the provision of pharmacy services;
- to ensure that all professional activities undertaken by them or under their control are covered by adequate professional indemnity arrangements;
- to satisfy themselves that the supplier, the source and the quality of any medicines or pharmaceutical ingredients are reputable. Medicines must normally be obtained from licensed wholesalers, the manufacturer or via a central purchasing or inter-branch transfer system. Records must be kept of the source of all medicines obtained by any other means and of measures taken to ensure the safety and efficacy of them. This standard is not

1. We have included the words "or other authority" to take account of the fact that some pharmacy technicians may work for dispensing doctors or primary care organisations and may be unable to refer to a pharmacist.

2. Although pharmacy technicians are not able to be sole owners, under Scottish law a pharmacist may own a pharmacy in partnership with a non-pharmacist.

- intended to cover loans from professional colleagues;
- (d) to ensure that all staff are informed of the professional activities they are expected to undertake. Clear instructions should be provided, designed to identify and minimise risks and reviewed regularly. Where possible standard operating procedures should be drafted;
 - (e) not to seek to impose conditions on pharmacists or pharmacy technicians which may adversely affect their ability to comply with their professional and legal duties;
 - (f) to ensure that adequate support staff and information about the pharmacy are provided to enable all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, including temporary staff and locums, to perform their duties effectively;
 - (g) to satisfy themselves that pharmacists and pharmacy technicians employed or engaged by them are aware of the need to undertake continuing professional development relevant to their professional duties;
 - (h) to ensure that pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and other staff employed by them or under their management have the requisite knowledge, skills and fitness to perform work delegated to them and comply with work instructions;
 - (i) to ensure that pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and other staff employed by them are sufficiently competent in English. Competency in other languages common to the area is desirable;
 - (j) to ensure that working conditions, facilities, equipment and materials enable the provision of services to professionally accepted standards;
 - (k) to have procedures to deal with incidents where there is a threat to the health of a patient or the public and review practices in the light of incidents;
 - (l) to ensure that effective measures are in place for protecting the confidentiality of person identifiable data;
 - (m) to ensure that an effective complaint handling procedure exists, whereby all complaints are dealt with promptly, constructively and honestly;
 - (n) to report to the Society concerns that a pharmacist's or pharmacy technician's professional competence or ability to practise may be impaired and put the public at risk;
 - (o) to notify the Society in writing of any changes in the ownership of registered pharmacy premises.

A.3 Pharmacy technicians supervising student pharmacy technicians

Student pharmacy technician assessors, supervisors and managers must ensure that:

- (a) student pharmacy technicians they assess understand and comply with the key responsibilities of a pharmacy technician and are competent. The public may be put

- at risk if an assessor or supervisor confirms the competence of a trainee who has not attained the required standard;
- (b) student pharmacy technicians receive wide-ranging experience, relative to the mandatory and specific optional S/NVQ units;
- (c) student pharmacy technician training meets the needs of the student including the workplace training and underpinning knowledge programmes;
- (d) student pharmacy technicians are properly supervised, in particular in relation to their responsibilities for services to the public;
- (e) the progress of student pharmacy technicians is reviewed regularly, with honest and constructive feedback inline with the requirements of the S/NVQ;
- (f) student pharmacy technicians are encouraged to self-appraise their performance;
- (g) all assessment documentation provides honest and objective assessment of competence;
- (h) they reflect on work processes and outcomes, evaluate their own performance and take action to develop their expertise and knowledge.

B. Professional competence

The public, the profession and the NHS expect pharmacy technicians to develop their professional performance to provide a high level of care to patients.

- (a) Pharmacy technicians must continually review the skills and knowledge required for their field of practice, identifying those skills or knowledge most in need of development or improvement and audit their performance as part of the review.
- (b) Pharmacy technicians must, each year, undertake continuing professional development structured to meet their personal needs, and be able to provide evidence of such.
- (c) Pharmacy technicians must be aware of the limits of their knowledge and refer to a pharmacist or other appropriate authority where necessary, having gathered all the relevant information, where a patient requires information or advice on a medicine being supplied.
- (d) Pharmacy technicians giving advice to prescribers, patients and others must be able to demonstrate competence and knowledge of medicines within the relevant therapeutic class.
- (e) Pharmacy technicians must be alert to potential adverse drug reactions and drug interactions and respond accordingly.

C. Confidentiality

The public expects pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and their staff to respect and protect confidentiality. This duty extends to any information relating to an individual which may be acquired in the course of a pharmacy technician's professional activities. Confidential information includes personal details and

medication, both prescribed and non-prescribed.

Pharmacy technicians must ensure that:

- (a) the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of their professional activities is respected and protected, and is disclosed only with the consent of the individual other than in the circumstances defined below in (b);
- (b) information is disclosed without the patient's consent only in the following circumstances:
 - (i) where the patient's parent, guardian or carer has consented to the disclosure and the patient's apparent age or health makes them incapable of consent;
 - (ii) pharmacy technicians should be aware that information about services provided to adolescents should not normally be disclosed to their parents.
 - (iii) where disclosure of the information is to a person or body empowered by statute to require such a disclosure;
 - (iv) where disclosure is directed by a coroner, judge or other presiding officer of a court, Crown Prosecution Service in England and Wales and Procurator Fiscal in Scotland;
 - (v) to a police officer or NHS Fraud Investigation Officer who provides in writing confirmation that disclosure is necessary to assist in the prevention, detection or prosecution of serious crime;
 - (vi) where necessary to prevent serious injury or damage to the health of the patient, a third party or to public health;
- (c) they do not disclose information relating to the prescribing practices of identifiable prescribers or their practices, other than for the necessary purposes of the NHS or other health care provider, unless the prescriber has given his written, informed consent to the disclosure;
- (d) access to confidential information within the pharmacy is restricted to those who require that information and who are themselves subject to an obligation of confidentiality;
- (e) the requirements of data protection legislation for data collection and use are complied with;
- (f) confidential information is effectively protected against improper disclosure when it is disposed of, stored transmitted or received;
- (g) pharmacy computer and manual systems which include patient specific information incorporate access control systems to minimise the risk of unauthorised or unnecessary access to the data. Pharmacy computer systems which include patient specific information and which are linked to the internet or other network must incorporate measures such as data encryption to eliminate the risk of unauthorised access to confidential data.

Questionnaire: Draft Code of Ethics for Pharmacy Technicians

The Pharmacy Technicians' Code of Ethics has been written to reflect the pharmacists' Code of Ethics. Is this the right approach?

YES NO

If you have replied no, what approach should we take?

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Key responsibilities

Does this section reflect the key responsibilities of a pharmacy technician?

YES NO

If you have replied no, what needs to be added or changed?

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Personal responsibilities

The introduction to section A sets out the personal responsibilities of a pharmacy technician.

In section A1 we set out 13 areas that we consider are considered important for pharmacy technicians providing professional services.

Are these personal responsibilities reasonable and comprehensive?

YES NO

If you have replied no, what needs to be added or changed?

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Section A2 sets out the additional responsibilities of pharmacy technicians who co-own a pharmacy in partnership with a pharmacist or who are managers in hospitals, trusts or other fields of practice.

Are these additional responsibilities reasonable and comprehensive?

YES NO

If you have replied no, what needs to be added or changed?

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Section A3 outlines the responsibilities of pharmacy technicians supervising student pharmacy technicians. These additional responsibilities are particularly important to ensure that pharmacy technicians entering the register are of a suitable standard.

Are these additional responsibilities reasonable and comprehensive?

YES NO

If you have replied no, what needs to be added or changed?

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Professional competence

Section B describes the expectation that pharmacy technicians will develop themselves and ensure that they are competent to perform their role.

Are these expectations reasonable and comprehensive?

YES NO

If you have replied no, what needs to be added or changed?

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Confidentiality

Section C covers the duty to maintain confidentiality. It is written to be identical to the pharmacists' Code of Ethics section on confidentiality.

Are these duties reasonable and comprehensive?

YES NO

If you have replied no, what needs to be added or changed?

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Do you have any other comments on the draft Pharmacy Technicians' Code of Ethics?

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