

Consultation on the self-selection of pharmacy medicines by the public

Pharmacy medicines are medicinal products that can be purchased over the counter from registered pharmacies. Although a prescription is not required to obtain pharmacy medicines, legislation states that these medicines can only be sold from registered pharmacies by a pharmacist or by someone who is acting under the supervision of a pharmacist.

In addition to these legal restrictions, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Code of Ethics and Standards places an ethical restriction on the accessibility of pharmacy medicines by the public. It currently states that: "Pharmacy medicines must not be accessible for self-selection". As a result pharmacy medicines are normally displayed behind the



**Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society
of Great Britain**

medicines counter, or in display cabinets that can only be opened by pharmacy staff. The intention of this ethical restriction is to help ensure safe, appropriate access to pharmacy medicines and protect public safety.

In 2001 a small number of pharmacies undertook trials in which pharmacy medicines were placed on display for self-selection by members of the public. The pharmacies involved in the trials had to comply with guidance developed by the Society. Since then an increasing number of pharmacies have expressed an interest in making pharmacy medicines available for self-selection.

Concluded overleaf

Self-selection of pharmacy medicines

Questionnaire

Completed questionnaire forms should be sent to Priya Sejpal, Royal Pharmaceutical Society, 1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN, to arrive by 13 April 2007

The Society would like to know your views on the questions set out below. The questionnaire may be photocopied. Please continue your comments on a separate sheet if necessary. The questionnaire can also be completed online at www.rpsgb.org

QUESTION 1 Do you think the Society should place professional restrictions on the way in which pharmacy medicines are displayed and made accessible to the public? **Yes** **No** **Not sure**

Please explain your answer

QUESTION 2 If you believe that there should be restrictions on the way in which pharmacy medicines are displayed, do you consider a complete prohibition on the self-selection of all pharmacy medicines to be appropriate? **Yes** **No** **Not sure**

Please explain your answer

QUESTION 3 As an alternative to a complete prohibition on the self-selection of all pharmacy medicines, are there certain types or classes of pharmacy medicines that should not be available for self-selection? **Yes** **No** **Not sure**

Please explain your answer. If you answered "yes" please give details of the classes of pharmacy medicines that you do not think should be available for self-selection.

A range of views have been expressed about whether restrictions should be placed on the way in which pharmacy medicines are displayed to the public. There is concern that having pharmacy medicines available for self-selection may compromise public safety by increasing access to medicines that are liable to misuse and reducing the opportunity for pharmacy staff to establish whether the medicine selected is appropriate for the purchaser. However, others have expressed a view that making pharmacy medicines available for self-selection will increase awareness of the range of pharmacy medicines and will enable the public to have greater involvement in decisions about their health needs.

The Society is seeking your views on the current ethical prohibition on the self-selection of pharmacy medicines and on possible alternative approaches to help ensure the safe, appropriate display of, and access to, pharmacy medicines. The responses to this consultation will be used to help us develop professional guidelines that reflect the views of the profession and the public.

The attached questionnaire sets out questions on which we would like your views. We would welcome detailed responses to this consultation and ask that you continue your comments on a separate sheet if necessary.

How to respond to the consultation

By post Please complete the attached questionnaire (photocopies are acceptable if you do not want to remove the form from *The Journal*), and send it to Priya Sejpal, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, 1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN.

Online Please complete the questionnaire online at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's website (www.rpsgb.org).

■ **Comments must be received no later than 13 April 2007**

Further information

The existing codes of ethics can be found on the Society's website at www.rpsgb.org.

If you would like further information, please contact Priya Sejpal, professional ethics pharmacist (tel 020 7572 2481; e-mail priya.sejpal@rpsgb.org).

QUESTION 4 If pharmacy medicines are made available for self-selection what, if any, professional restrictions should be put in place? (For example, should pharmacy medicines be displayed in a designated area of the pharmacy or should pharmacy medicines be stored at a certain height above the floor?)

Please explain your answer

QUESTION 5 Instead of making full packs of pharmacy medicines accessible to the public by self-selection, are there other options that you consider may be appropriate? (For example, would the display of empty packs of pharmacy medicines containing a patient information leaflet be an alternative option?)

Yes No Not sure

Please explain your answer

FURTHER COMMENTS Please let us have any other comments on this matter

ABOUT YOU If you are responding as an individual, which of the following categories best describes you?

Pharmacist
 Pharmacy technician
 Member of the public
 Other (please give details in box)

If you are responding as a representative of an organisation, which of the following categories best describes your organisation?

Pharmacy business
 Pharmacy body
 Patient representative body
 Regulatory body
 Other (please give details in box)