

Scottish Referral Guidelines (SRG) for Suspected Cancer - Wider Stakeholder Engagement

Wider Stakeholder Engagement

When providing feedback, use the designated feedback box for the specific section you are commenting on. If a section does not apply or you have no feedback, leave it blank. Please ensure your comments clearly specify which part of the section you are addressing, if possible using page number, paragraph and line number. Each text box has a 4,000 character limit, you can use the general feedback box at the bottom if you need to exceed this limit.

You can submit your feedback at any time. Additionally, the form allows you to save your input and return to edit it until the deadline. If needed, you may also complete an additional form.

Introduction

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Purpose and development of the Guidelines

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Referral process

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) is the professional leadership body for pharmacists and pharmacy in Great Britain. Our mission is to put pharmacy at the forefront of patient care, striving to become the world leader in the safe and effective use of medicines. Since our founding in 1841, we have championed the profession, promoted pharmacy in the media and government, and supported pharmacists in their education and development.

In these draft guidelines, we are pleased to see pharmacists recognised as healthcare professionals in primary care, alongside GPs, optometrists, dentists and others, with the potential to identify patients showing signs and symptoms of suspected cancer. The document states that local arrangements should be in place in each Board area for primary care professionals, including pharmacists, to ensure rapid referral is made. We believe more needs to be done to make formalised referral pathway exist consistently across Scotland.

Community pharmacists, who are highly accessible healthcare professionals, can play a crucial role in identifying signs and symptoms of suspected cancer at an earlier stage. Through the Pharmacy First and Pharmacy First Plus initiatives, community pharmacists are seeing many more patients, conducting clinical examinations, and enhancing their expertise in diagnosing clinical conditions. With the increasing volume of patients accessing care from community pharmacists, there is greater complexity within their patient cohorts, making the ability to refer patients within primary care to GPs, optometrists, and dentists an essential development. For certain cancer types, it may be appropriate, with additional training and clinical supervision, for pharmacists to have access to direct referral pathways, such as for suspected skin, lung or head and neck cancers.

To optimise the impact of community pharmacists on earlier detection of cancer, we believe that the infrastructure to improve the integration of community pharmacists is an essential

component. Not only with integration into appropriate referral pathways, but also in access to the patient's health record – read and write access for pharmacists would improve decision making and ultimately management of clinical risk in the event of a suspected cancer.

In our policy, Utilising community pharmacists to support people with cancer published in January 2020 we discuss the opportunities that exist for community pharmacists to support the goal of earlier detection.

- **Convenient Access:** Community pharmacies provide an accessible place for people to present with symptoms, potentially leading to early referrals and diagnosis.
- **Screening Services:** Pharmacists could offer screening services for early cancer detection, reducing waiting times and improving health outcomes
- **Referral Pathways:** Community pharmacists can be integrated into referral pathways, ensuring timely diagnosis and treatment.

The Community Pharmacy Early Diagnosis of Cancer Pilot is ongoing in NHS England, 60 pharmacies are piloting a direct referrals service for patients presenting to the pharmacy with certain red flag symptoms which could indicate cancer. The pilot is running in Bolton, Cornwall, Norfolk and Waveney and South East London. Each area is testing a slightly different clinical protocol but, in each site, relevant patients are offered a consultation with the pharmacist and, if they meet the referral threshold, they are referred directly to either primary or secondary care services depending on their presenting symptoms. Pharmacies across the country are referring patients, and the first cancer diagnoses have been made because of these referrals. The pilots will conclude in early 2025/26 and an evaluation will be undertaken.

We are also aware of pilots which have been explored in the North of Scotland. Further research in this area will be vital to ensure that any pathways developed are effective.

Brain and Central Nervous System cancers

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Breast cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Gynaecological cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Haematological cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Head and Neck cancer and Thyroid cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Lower Gastrointestinal cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Lung and Pleural cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Sarcoma and Bone cancers

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Skin cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Upper Gastrointestinal cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Urological cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Non-specific symptoms of cancer

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Cancer in Children and Young People

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Appendices

Ensure your comments clearly indicate which specific part of the section you are addressing.

Any other feedback?

We welcome any general comments or additional feedback you'd like to share.

This is a comprehensive guide detailing the signs and symptoms of suspected cancer and we are pleased to be invited to comment. The document states that the guideline will be made available to all healthcare professionals to whom someone may first present with symptoms of possible cancer. In addition, it states that it is essential that any consultation or other opportunity where a person from a deprived area presents with symptoms suggestive of cancer is used to full advantage. Community pharmacists fall into these categories and are more often situated in deprived areas than wealthier ones providing accessible, high quality care and education for patients and the public. The guidance states that local arrangements should be in place to ensure rapid referral. However, recognising that a local approach to development of referral pathways introduces the risk of variation and inequity, we would welcome the development of more formal, nationally consistent referral pathways including working towards access to health records for community pharmacy teams.

In order to support community pharmacists to have an awareness of the referral guidelines it would be useful to have a quick reference guide so that the referral guidelines were in a user friendly format. To increase awareness, consideration should be given to socialising the guidelines with groups of professionals across all settings including community pharmacists.

You can print a copy of your answer after you submit