



A Manifesto for Pharmacy in Wales

Introduction

As the third largest profession working in the NHS, pharmacists are a core part of the health service in Wales. They are highly trained professionals having undertaken a 4-year masters level degree, a year of pre-registration training and mandatory further professional education throughout their careers. They lead on the safe and effective use of medicines within the NHS and support patients to stay well and to get the most from their medication and the significant investment in medicines made in Wales every year.

The pharmacy profession is evolving at pace, adapting to the changing needs of 21st century health care and equipping itself to deliver clinical interventions wherever pharmaceutical care is needed. The importance of pharmacy's clinical and operational leadership was brought into sharp focus by the COVID-19 pandemic where the pharmacy team sustained medicines supply and ensured continuity of patient care in all settings and under very challenging circumstances. Despite this and the profession's commitment to meet increasing patient demand, many RPS members have indicated that they feel stretched, under-resourced and even unrecognised in their clinical role.

The next Welsh Government must turn this around and the people of Wales must benefit from the fullest potential of the pharmacy profession throughout the period of the 6th Welsh Parliament. Against a backdrop of a public health crisis, shifting priorities and new service configurations, this manifesto sets out the actions that can add important value to the next Welsh Government's policy programme to improve patient care and to contribute to the future sustainability of the NHS in Wales.

Key Asks



Embed the clinical capabilities of the pharmacy team across all NHS settings through robust multi-professional workforce planning, education and professional development.



Ensure that citizens have access to emerging advanced medical therapies and pharmacogenomic therapies through investment in pharmacist training and service development.



Further integrate pharmacist independent prescribing into routine NHS care and ensure the universal roll out of services proven to benefit patients and improve capacity.



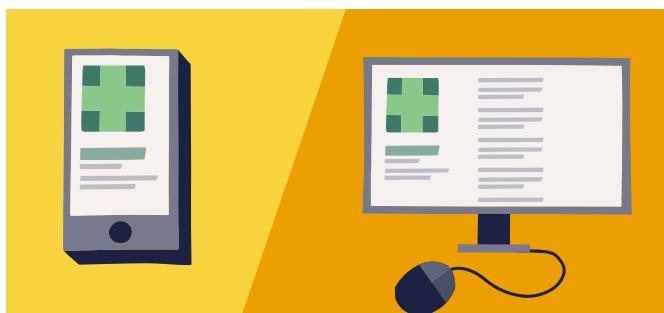
Support a legal framework to allow community pharmacists to make professional decisions in the supply of medicines to patients during times of medicines shortages.



Reduce the risk of medication errors and emergency hospital admissions by allowing pharmacists to access and update a shared electronic patient record.



Improve the quality of patient care by guaranteeing protected learning and teaching time for pharmacists across all sectors.



Accelerate the development and roll out of digital prescribing solutions across Wales.



Ensure the highest quality of care by supporting the health and wellbeing of pharmacists through access to NHS funded mental health and wellbeing support.

To enable patients to benefit from the unique skills and knowledge of pharmacists, we call on the next Welsh Government to:

1

Embed the clinical capabilities of the pharmacy team across all NHS settings through robust multi-professional workforce planning, education and professional development.

A re-design of the initial education and training of pharmacists is needed to create a truly agile pharmacy workforce within the multi-professional team, equipped to move between health care settings and to provide the right clinical interventions at every stage of the patient pathway.

The next Welsh Government must build upon the transformative learning programme already in place, providing pre-registration pharmacists the opportunity to develop their clinical practice across community, primary care and hospital settings.

The same vision is called for during the four years of MPharm undergraduate training. Investment in increased quality and quantity of clinical placements in the undergraduate training will ensure that pharmacists will have the clinical skills, knowledge and confidence to be the expert prescriber of medicines within the multi-disciplinary team.

A crucial enabler for developing the workforce post-registration would be a Foundation / newly qualified programme embedded for all pharmacy professionals. With the advent of more clinical services within the community pharmacy setting and more pharmacists working within the GP practice settings, it is even more important that further support, mentoring and guidance is available to all early career pharmacists, to further develop their skills and instil them with confidence to provide optimal care for patients and the public.

Through investment in pharmacy education and a clear alignment of professional development with national workforce planning and service development the next Welsh Government can ensure patients are able to benefit from access to a pharmacy profession that is highly trained and confident in delivering clinical care at every stage of the patient journey.

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2

Further integrate pharmacist independent prescribing into routine NHS care and ensure the universal roll out of services proven to benefit patients and improve capacity.

With unique clinical training and in-depth scientific understanding of medicines, pharmacists are the ideal practitioners to prescribe medicines. A pharmacist independent prescriber can prescribe autonomously for any condition within their clinical competence. They provide opportunities for new ways of working and increasing capacity and access for patients to high quality care.

Currently patients are more likely to benefit from pharmacist independent prescribers based in hospitals and GP practices. This can be through prescribing on hospital wards, emergency departments, out-patient clinics, GP clinics, home visits and care home visits. The use of independent prescribing pharmacists in these settings must be developed and expanded so that patients and healthcare teams can continue to benefit from their skills.

Patients should benefit from access to independent prescribers in all community pharmacies across Wales. The roll out of the Choose Pharmacy Independent Prescribers' Service has enabled access in some areas of Wales. This service has been well received by patients and healthcare professionals alike, enabling continuity of care. The service, which depends on pharmacist access to patient records and a clear system of communication between pharmacists and GPs, is not universally provided however and is only available in certain community pharmacies in pockets of the country. Steps must be taken to address this imbalance and roll out these models nationally so that communities and patients throughout Wales can benefit from access to pharmacist independent prescribers. Building capacity within the existing community pharmacy workforce to advance and become independent prescribers is essential to enable the shift to universal patient access to an independent prescriber in community pharmacy settings.

The next Welsh Government must recognise and fully incorporate the clinical skills of pharmacists and independent pharmacist prescribers into national workforce planning. Service models must be in place to utilise these skills across the patient pathway and for the public to gain access to and benefit from those expertise and services.

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3

Reduce the risk of medication errors and emergency hospital admissions by allowing pharmacists to access and update a shared electronic patient record.

Understanding the individual patient circumstances through access to patient health records, laboratory results and previous treatment documentation is critical to patient safety. Yet for many pharmacists, this is not permitted. Routine read and write access for all pharmacists that deliver clinical care in the community, on hospital wards, in emergency departments, and in GP surgeries is imperative to:

- Significantly improve the care patients can expect to receive.
- Enable pharmacists to make more informed clinical decisions.
- Improve medicine adherence and reduce the number of medicine related errors that contribute to unscheduled care and hospital admissions.
- Meet patient expectations that pharmacists have routine access to their records¹.
- Reduce pressures on other primary care practitioners

Patient information is currently recorded in numerous places and is not accessible to all health professionals, representing a risk to patients. A single patient record that is accessible to all relevant health professionals would enable better communication across the multidisciplinary team. The implementation of the IT infrastructure to enable safer clinical decisions must be a pressing commitment of the next Welsh Government.

4

Accelerate the development and roll out of digital prescribing solutions across Wales.

Prescribing practice in Wales has yet to benefit widely from digital transformation. Paper-based prescriptions continue to be used and there is a significant systems gap preventing a joined-up and interoperable approach between primary and secondary care. This increases the risks of transcribing errors and delays in the prescribing process right across the NHS. This is unacceptable in the 21st Century when digital solutions can mitigate the problems and risks associated with a paper based prescribing system and advance prescribing practice to improve patient care and medicines safety.

Patients in Wales must be able to benefit from seamless care when they are prescribed medication whether in hospital or community settings. Efficiencies in primary care prescribing have already started to be routinely delivered through the electronic transmission of prescriptions. This must be supported by an IT infrastructure that allows GP and community pharmacy systems to communicate with each other. This infrastructure must also be able to link seamlessly to hospital prescribing systems to create a robust, efficient and accurate joined-up prescribing solution. Urgent action is needed in hospital settings to implement an end-to-end electronic prescribing and administration system to support safe, effective and efficient medicines prescribing and administration. This must also be capable of connecting into primary care contractors to import and export information and support safe and efficient transfers of care.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of electronic prescribing solutions, which if in place in Wales, could have improved communication about prescriptions between health professionals in all healthcare settings, enhanced continuity of patient care and decreased the risks associated with virus transmission due to footfall from one care setting to another.

¹EMIS Healthcare. 2014. Public support wider access to GP record. Available at: <https://www.emishealth.com/news-events/news/public-support-wider-access-to-gp-record/>

To enable patients to benefit from the unique skills and knowledge of pharmacists, we call on the next Welsh Government to:

5

Ensure that citizens have access to emerging advanced medical therapies and pharmacogenomic therapies through investment in pharmacist training and service development.

Advanced medical therapies and pharmacogenomic therapy are emerging fields of health care that offer cutting edge advances in medicinal treatment. While advanced medical therapies focus on the use of the treatment of genetic disorders as well as the repair and regeneration of human tissue, pharmacogenomics focuses on the influences of genetic variations in individual responses to medicines and helps to determine the development of personalised medicines. With genetic factors accounting for between 25% and 50% of sub-optimal medicine responses, pharmacogenetics has the potential to greatly improve the effectiveness of medicines by personalising care.

Pharmacists are particularly well placed to lead on these new therapies and will have an increasingly important role in their governance and management, including the use, storage, handling, logistics and ethical considerations of introducing these new approaches. With combined scientific and clinical knowledge and training, pharmacists are well placed to communicate complex drug information in a way that is understandable to patients. Pharmacists also have the potential to offer patients the opportunity to benefit from these emerging new technologies in their own communities.

There are numerous international examples of services that employ pharmacists to lead on pharmacogenomics (Norway, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada and the USA)². These services allow patients who report treatments as ineffective or have experienced adverse drug reactions to be identified by their community pharmacists for a genetic diagnostic test within the pharmacy. The pharmacist will then interpret and explain the result to the patient before agreeing any action tailored to the patient's genetic makeup.

6

Support a legal framework to allow community pharmacists to make professional decisions in the supply of medicines to patients during times of medicines shortages.

Medicines shortages can have a significant impact on patient care and health care professional time and resources. Pharmacists and GPs are having to spend increased time dealing with medicines shortages*, with community pharmacists legally obliged to contact prescribers or refer patients back to prescribers to amend original prescriptions, even for minor adjustments. This is frustrating for the patient, pharmacist and prescriber as it can cause significant delays in patient access to medicines and take up valuable health professional time. Furthermore, in times of pandemic or emergency situations, the effect on patient care can become particularly acute.

The clinical expertise and professionalism of pharmacists can be used to help manage the continuity of care for people prescribed medicines that are in short supply. Mitigating the negative effects of medicines shortages will require legislative change to allow pharmacists to make minor amendments without referral back to the prescriber. Amendments would allow pharmacists to make changes to quantity, strength and formulation of the medicines prescribe. It would not allow for a therapeutic substitution without discussion with the prescriber. This has been standard routine practice for pharmacists in secondary care for years and in Scotland where there is a recognised medicines shortages list. The support of the next Welsh Government is vitally important in establishing a legal framework for the routine management of medicines shortages by pharmacists.

* [i] <https://www.pgeu.eu/publications/press-release-pgeu-medicine-shortages-survey-2019-results/>

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7

Improve the quality of patient care by guaranteeing protected learning and teaching time for pharmacists across all sectors.

As managing the health of patients becomes more complex due to the increasing prevalence of multiple long-term conditions and the development of new innovative medicines, the need for pharmacy input will continue to increase. The public must be assured that pharmacists can provide increasingly complex services safely. This will require them to continually build on their competence and constantly develop and advance their practise.

Pharmacists do not routinely receive protected time to undertake professional development and learning, or to be able to teach and mentor others. Currently, pharmacy workforce planning rarely takes into consideration the time and cost of education and training. A 2020 survey by the Pharmaceutical Journal revealed that nearly three quarters of community pharmacist do not benefit from any protected learning time.

Any training and teaching that is undertaken by pharmacy team members can put a strain on other colleagues in the team, adding to work pressures. Equity across all professions is now needed, ensuring protected and funded learning time for pharmacists in all settings is embedded within workforce planning. This could be achieved by greater use of technology – virtual or e-learning packages – plus solutions to protect the time of pharmacists such as the flexibilities introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the time of pharmacists to deal with complex queries and to prioritise workloads.

8

Ensure the highest quality of care by supporting the health and wellbeing of pharmacists through access to NHS funded mental health and wellbeing support.

The challenges of meeting the growing demands placed on the health service are having a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of health professionals. The pharmacy workforce is no different with a recent RPS member survey indicating that pharmacists are routinely feeling stressed and under pressure. Worryingly 89% of all respondents indicated they felt at high risk of burnout as measured by the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory.

The Covid-19 pandemic intensified the need for mental health and wellbeing support of health professionals working on the front line. As the only health profession to keep doors fully open to the public during the pandemic, the full force of the crisis was felt by community pharmacists and their teams. The crisis provided community pharmacists with access for the first time to the benefits of counselling services provided to NHS employees. As lone professionals providing unscheduled care throughout a nine-hour working day, community pharmacists will continue to need access to mental health and wellbeing support. Parity of access to NHS funded wellbeing support must therefore be made available to community and primary care pharmacists, not only to cope with pressures and the aftermath of the pandemic but on an ongoing and routine basis.



To provide accessible healthcare

On high streets throughout Wales, community pharmacies provide patients with quick access to healthcare advice and support from a health professional. They are a particularly valuable resource in rural areas where the nearest GP surgery may be miles away and in deprived areas as a means of reducing inequalities in health and reversing the inverse care law.



To improve clinical outcomes

As the experts in medicines and their effect on the body, pharmacists can support patients to get the most benefit from their medicines. Using their unique skills and knowledge, pharmacists ensure that medicines interact with each other effectively and safely, tailor doses appropriately and, in some instances, prescribe new medicines and deprescribe existing medicines that are of no further benefit to the patient.



To ensure value for money from medicines

With their unique knowledge of medicines, pharmacists are a vital asset to ensure that the significant annual investment in medicines is spent wisely and in a cost-effective manner. They do this by supporting appropriate prescribing and working with patients to deprescribe inappropriate and ineffective medicines.

Why Wales needs pharmacists' expertise



To build capacity in primary care

Pharmacists are well placed to increase access to care for patients in primary care and community settings by taking an increased role in managing common ailments, acute conditions and long-term conditions. This can enable GPs more time and capacity for longer appointments and to focus on diagnoses and the management of more complex patients.

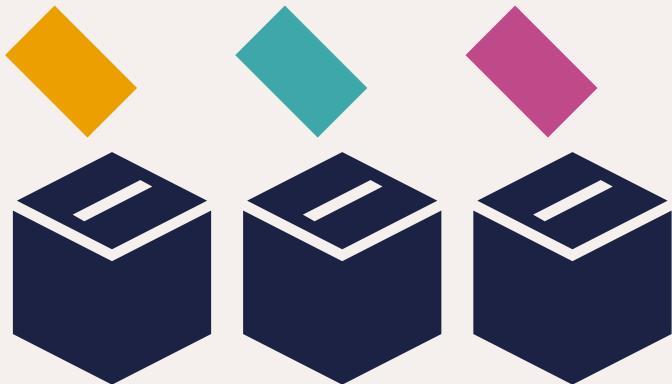


To prevent avoidable harm

When used incorrectly medicines can cause significant harm to patients. Inappropriate medicine use also introduces unforeseen challenges such as unplanned and emergency hospital admissions as the result of adverse drug reactions. Ensuring that patients and health professionals have access to pharmacists and their expert medicines knowledge is paramount to reducing these risks.

How you can help

Are you a candidate in the 2021 Welsh election?



- Visit a local pharmacist, take a photo, and hear first-hand about how pharmacists make a real difference to your constituents' health.
- Support our calls to action and tweet **#votepharmacy_Wales** to the RPS **@rpharms_wales** to show your support (you can find us on Facebook too).
- Tell your constituents about how you are supporting the pharmacy profession.

About the Royal Pharmaceutical Society

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society is the professional body for pharmacists and pharmacy in Great Britain.

We lead and support the development of the pharmacy profession to improve the public's health and wellbeing, including through advancements in science, research and education.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society in Wales

2 Ashtree Court
Cardiff Gate Business Park
Pontprennau
Cardiff
CF23 8RW

Tel: 02920 730310

Email: Wales@rpharms.com

 [@RPS_Wales](https://twitter.com/RPS_Wales)

Visit www.rpharms.com for further information