

Confidentiality Protocol for Pharmacists and Technicians Working with GP Practices

Professional Code of Ethics

Pharmacists are bound by their professional code of ethics issued by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. As regards confidentiality these state that a pharmacist must respect the confidentiality of information acquired in the course of professional practice relating to a patient and the patient's family. Such information must not be disclosed to anyone without the consent of the patient or appropriate guardian unless the interest of the patient or the public requires such a disclosure.

Further elaboration of this principle is to be found in the society's code of ethics. In particular it is worth noting that information relating to the prescribing practices of identifiable doctors or doctor's practices, and other prescribers, is confidential, and must not be disclosed, other than for necessary purposes of the NHS, unless the prescriber has given informed written consent to the disclosure.

Pharmacy technicians do not have a professional code of ethics. However all pharmacy technicians employed by the PCG/PCT are required to adhere to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society code.

Sharing Information within the Health Care Team

Practice pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are employed by the PCG/PCT/Health Authority, working at the practices to support the clinical care of their patients at the invitation of the clinicians there. As such they comprise part of the health care team, as defined by the General Medical Council, for the duration of their attachment. Information concerning particular patients can be shared within a health care team unless a patient objects. Specific consent for information to be shared to allow treatment is not required as patients have implied consent by joining the practice list. However it is good practice for any GP Practice to make sure that patients are aware that personal information about them will be shared within the health care team, unless they object, and the reasons for this.

Use of Anonymised Data

If information for the purposes of audit, research, public health purposes, teaching and training or to plan the delivery of healthcare is required, this information should be kept to the minimum necessary. It may only be passed to other organisations or agencies in anonymised form.

Patient Identifiable Information

You must adhere to the Caldicott principles which govern access to patient identifiable information. These are as follows

1. Justify the purpose
2. Only use it where absolutely necessary
3. Use the minimum that is required
4. Access is on a strict need to know basis
5. Everyone must understand their responsibilities
6. Understand and comply with the law

You are responsible for personal information about patients and must make sure it is effectively protected against improper disclosure at all times both within and outside the practice.

Computer Systems

Wherever possible work should be prepared and stored on the practice's clinical system. Protection of this data will be covered by the practice's security policy.

If you need to work on another computer system, e.g. a laptop, you must not take any patient identifiable material away from the practice to work on.

If you need to take printouts of the patient record in order to visit patients away from the practice these must be returned promptly to the practice. They should be disposed of safely once they are no longer required.

Disclosing Patient Identifiable Information in the Public Interest

If you feel that you must disclose information in the public interest it is strongly recommended that you consult with the Caldicott Guardian (currently Jess Tweney) before so doing.

I have read and agree to abide by the North Sheffield Primary Care Group Confidentiality Protocol for Pharmacists and Technicians Working with GP Practices

Signed

Date

Original to be kept at PCG Office
Employee to keep a copy