

**Have you ever thought of becoming a pharmacist? It is a varied and rewarding career and one that you may not have thought about much.**

## **SLIDE ONE**

### **What do you think.....?**

*The aim of this slide is to interact with the audience and stimulate some discussion. The idea is to find out what their preconceptions may be first e.g 'shopkeeper' 'white coat' 'pill counter.' And perhaps where they have had contact with a pharmacist. Hopefully by the end of the presentation they will have changed their minds!*

### **What exactly does a pharmacist do?**

Well, pharmacists play a crucial role in delivering healthcare to patients. They are the experts in medicine and they understand the interactions and strengths of all the medicines produced.

Pharmacists' roles are evolving too - they are taking on more and more healthcare roles and responsibilities as society's needs change. For instance, some pharmacists are not just dispensing medicines but are now prescribing medicines as well. They are also carrying out diagnostic testing for conditions such as diabetes, asthma and chlamydia. They check people's blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and some pharmacists are also running stop smoking and weight reduction clinics...and much, much more.

The only contact you may have had with a pharmacist is when you visit a pharmacy if you are feeling unwell. However, there are many different types of pharmacists, and many different places that you can work. If you are looking for

a challenge, flexibility and a rewarding career, then you need look no further than the pharmacy profession!

## **SLIDE TWO**

### **Where can pharmacy take you?**

The different places you can work include:

- **Community pharmacies** – these are in the high streets of cities, towns and villages across the UK – either within supermarkets and chains, such as Boots and Lloyds, or in independently owned shops. These shops put you in the front line of healthcare in the community. Don't be fooled into thinking that this job is all about being stuck behind a counter dispensing medicines! With millions of visits a day, community pharmacists help people adopt healthier lifestyles – by giving up smoking or helping with weight reduction programmes. As business managers, community pharmacists also handle the challenge of financial management and responsibility for staff, premises and stock.
- **Hospital pharmacists** – these are either NHS or private – there are specialist hospital pharmacists in areas such as haematology (blood), nephrology (kidneys), respiratory medicine, cardiology (heart), urology (urinary), diabetes, gastroenterology (stomach & intestines), infectious diseases, paediatrics (children) and the care of the elderly.
- **Primary Care Organisations** – in recent years the NHS has shifted more towards primary care. Primary care means trying to prevent the need for patients to go into hospital and helping them to stay well and manage their illnesses on an everyday basis, at home. Primary care pharmacists work closely with GPs, practice nurses and pharmacists to get the best use of medicines and health services in their local community.
- **Government and Regulatory**

Regulatory pharmacists work for Government bodies such as the MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Service) set up to help protect public health. Their job is to ensure that medicines submitted by drug companies are safe before they can be manufactured and marketed to the public. You need critical evaluation skills for this branch of the profession.

- **Pharmacists in industry** – these pharmacists research and develop new medicines. One of the main attractions of this job is knowing that you are part of team that is helping society by “inventing” new medicines for tomorrow. Obviously you need to have a keen interest in science and have an analytical brain – but if you are interested in groundbreaking new therapies, then industrial pharmacy could be for you.
- **Academic pharmacy** – you could also have a career in the world of pharmacy teaching. This world is varied, interesting and satisfying. You can work in universities, research institutes and other organisations around the world often combining teaching with practising as a pharmacist. Put simply – academic pharmacists are involved in lots of exciting roles and often working on their own initiative they have a great deal of control over their day-to-day working lives.
- **Locum pharmacists** – these are pharmacists who “step in” for other pharmacists, either when the main pharmacist is on holiday, or has other commitments and the pharmacy needs extra support. Locum pharmacy can be an excellent career path if you’re not sure where you want to work, you like the idea of being “freelance” or you have family commitments (such as children) that mean that you would prefer to work part-time. In any event, locum pharmacy is always an option that you can take up at any time in your career when you want to be self-employed, or if you want to “opt-out” of full-time employment.

- **Veterinary pharmacists** – As a pharmacist you can make a valuable contribution to the welfare of animals by supplying a professional service to pet owners. Since autumn 2005 much more emphasis has been placed by the government on involving pharmacy in the supply of animal medicines and the dispensing of veterinary prescriptions. Veterinary pharmacy can also take you into teaching, industry or a government body such as the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. If your interest is in veterinary pharmacy then find out which schools of pharmacy provide a veterinary option by contacting their admissions departments and make sure in addition that you have an element of veterinary pharmacy in your preregistration year.
- Even the **armed forces** require pharmacists and offer opportunities working in the UK and abroad.

## **SLIDE THREE**

### **What can pharmacy offer you?**

A career in pharmacy can be really rewarding, both financially and professionally. You can expect a good salary, flexible working, variety, satisfaction and lots of opportunities.

## **SLIDE FOUR**

### **Qualifications**

There are 24 schools of pharmacy in the UK which are part of universities. ... (these are listed in the careers leaflet that I will hand out after my presentation)... but you can also find out more details about each of them from their websites.

To be accepted by one of these schools you will need GCSEs in maths, English language and double science. Plus you will need A levels in chemistry, plus usually two of the following: biology, maths or physics.

And some students have other qualifications such as the:

- Irish School Leaving Certificate
- National or Higher National Certificate / Diplomas
- International Baccalaureate or Access qualifications.

I would recommend that you always check the precise entry requirements of your chosen school of pharmacy, as they do vary and the criteria may change.

## **SLIDE FIVE**

### **Studying pharmacy**

To qualify as a pharmacist, you have to take a four-year Master of Pharmacy degree course, followed by one year's preregistration training, working within a pharmacy, (but you get paid during this year!)

So the training is five years in total.

At the end of your preregistration year you must pass the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain's (RPSGB) registration exam, after which you will be allowed to practise as a pharmacist. The RPSGB is the governing body for the profession so you must register with them in order to practise. (In Northern Ireland you must register with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland - The PSNI).

Pharmacy as a profession is obviously "science-based" but you also need to be a good communicator. This is essential if you decide to work in a community or hospital pharmacy, as you will be talking to patients everyday to help them to understand their medication and to answer any queries about their condition / illness, so it is crucial that you care able to empathise with people.

## **SLIDE SIX**

### **Becoming a technician**

If university and A levels are not for you, then there is another route into pharmacy which is to become a pharmacy technician. Most pharmacy technicians work in one of two areas, hospital pharmacy and community pharmacy. The technicians role involves preparing and delivering drugs, storing incoming drugs and making up sterile preparations. Some technicians work for primary care organisations providing advice on pharmacy services to local GPs and others. There are 5 grades of pharmacy technician within hospital pharmacy and the role of the technician is evolving all the time. The best thing about being a technician is that you work and get paid while you study. You should apply for trainee posts directly to employers and then they will train you while you study the NVQ/SVQ level 3 in pharmacy services which usually takes around two years to complete.

## **SLIDE SEVEN**

### **What next?**

This is the stage in your education when you need to start looking at all the options, so if you are thinking about a career in the pharmacy profession, then this is quite a good checklist:

- 1) Think about your A levels. Choose chemistry, biology, maths or physics.
- 2) Have a chat with your careers advisor here at your school / college.
- 3) Have a look at the Schools of Pharmacy websites, as they'll give you a better flavour of what's expected. These can all be found via the Society's [www.pharmacycareers.org.uk](http://www.pharmacycareers.org.uk) website
- 4) Contact your local community or hospital pharmacy – see if they'll give you some work experience.
- 5) Try writing to the pharmaceutical companies – you can get a list from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry ([www.abpi.org.uk](http://www.abpi.org.uk)).

## **SLIDE EIGHT**

### **Further information...**

- 6) And log onto the NHS Careers website ([www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)) where you can get some useful factsheets
- 7) You can visit the British Pharmaceutical Students' Association website [www.bpsa.co.uk](http://www.bpsa.co.uk) if you would like to find out more about what being a pharmacy student is like.
- 8) Feel free to email the RPSGB careers service if you have any questions [careers@rpsgb.org](mailto:careers@rpsgb.org)

## **SLIDE NINE**

### **Leaflet**

Please come and collect one of our leaflets which lists all of the schools of pharmacy, includes more information and has some case studies from qualified pharmacists.

## **SLIDE TEN**

### **website**

The careers website [www.pharmacycareers.org.uk](http://www.pharmacycareers.org.uk) also has links to all of the schools of pharmacy and further information on training to be a pharmacist or technician.

**I hope that this presentation has given you a little bit more information about what a pharmacist does and how varied their role can be. It is just left for me to wish you good luck for the future and I'll be happy to answer any questions.**

**Thank You.**