

The revised *Code of Ethics for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians*: Questions & Answers

Q Why was the Code reviewed?

A In 2005 the Society committed to undertake a fundamental review of the existing Code of Ethics and Standards for pharmacists and Code of Ethics for pharmacy technicians in response to the changing roles, responsibilities, and working practice of the pharmacy profession. The new Code has been designed to promote and support the use of professional judgement and reflects the professional considerations facing modern pharmacy.

Q What was the review process?

A A working group was formed to oversee the review process. This group contained representatives from each sector of pharmacy as well as patient and public interest representatives.

Council stated from the outset that it wished to engage the profession and public throughout the review process and a series of consultations were held. Responses to these consultations were vital in shaping the revised Code.

Q What has changed?

A The structure of the revised Code of Ethics is very different from the existing Codes. The fundamental changes include:

- The revised Code of Ethics is based on a set of principles that will inform the conduct, practice and performance of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians
- The principles are intended to be applicable to all sectors of the profession, irrespective of whether an individual is involved in direct patient care
- The revised Code applies to both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. This is based on the fact that the same ethical principles should be applicable to all sectors of the profession, even though how they are applied will depend on an individual's role and circumstances
- The revised Code is designed to promote and support a culture of accountability and professional judgement
- The revised Code does not contain detailed technical guidance, but acts as the core document from which further standards and guidance can be developed

The requirements of the revised code reflect key issues for modern pharmacy practice, such as encouraging patients to be involved in decisions about their care, respecting patient choice and working in partnership with other healthcare professionals.

Q What are the principles that the Code is based on?

A The revised Code of Ethics is based on seven principles. Each principle is supported by requirements that explain the types of actions and behaviours expected of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians when applying the principles in practice. The seven principles are:

1. Make the care of patients your first concern
2. Exercise your professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public
3. Show respect for others
4. Encourage patients to participate in decisions about their care
5. Develop your professional knowledge and competence
6. Be honest and trustworthy
7. Take responsibility for your working practices

Q If the revised Code does not include detailed technical guidance, where can I obtain this information?

A Unlike previous versions, detailed standards and guidance will be produced separately from the Code.

Seven professional standards and guidance documents have been developed to support and expand on the principles of the new Code of Ethics in the following areas:

- Patient consent
- Patient confidentiality
- Sale and supply of medicines
- Pharmacist prescribers
- Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in positions of authority
- Advertising
- Internet pharmacy

Q When does the revised Code come in to effect?

A The revised Code comes in to force on 1 August 2007. The supporting professional standards and guidance documents will also come into effect on this date. The requirements of the existing Code will still apply until 1 August. You can get a preview of the revised Code and its supporting documents on the Society's website www.rpsgb.org.

Q When will I receive my revised copy of the Code?

A Printed copies of the new Code and its supporting documents will be distributed to all registrants with *The Pharmaceutical Journal* on 21 July 2007.

Q Who should I contact if I have any questions?

A Further information about the revised Code of Ethics and the review process can be obtained by contacting Lynsey Cleland, Head of Professional Ethics on tel: 020 7572 2519, email: lynsey.cleland@rpsgb.org.

Advice on the Code and other professional or legal obligations can be obtained by contacting the Society's Legal and Ethical Advisory Service on tel: 020 7572 2308, email: ftp@rpsgb.org.