



CODE OF ETHICS (Parts 2 - 5) REVIEW DRAFT – FOR CONSULTATION

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Introduction

Users, patients/clients and the general public have a right to accountability, accessibility and transparency from all health regulators.

All pharmacists in Northern Ireland are obliged to provide a service of the highest quality.

This Code of Ethics details and explains the ***eight mandatory fundamental principles, of equal importance***, which are designed to protect the health and well being of the public and to ensure competence and ethical behaviour among members of the profession, regardless of area of practice. Each broad principle is elucidated in a series of more detailed ***obligations*** that explain the required standards/'must-do's' of professional behaviour. This list is not exhaustive.

The Eight Principles and their supporting Obligations encompass what it means to be a registered pharmacist in Northern Ireland.

A breach of the obligations and by association, of the principles may bring your fitness to practise into question.

Pharmacy registration

Obligations and privileges go hand in hand with registration as a pharmacist.

Registration as a pharmacist requires you to:

- Use and develop your professional knowledge and skills for the benefit of those who seek your professional services,
- Ensure professional activities are performed to an acceptable level,
- Establish and maintain good relationships with others, and
- Act to promote and maintain public confidence in the pharmacy profession.

The Code is the Society's core guidance on the conduct, practice and professional performance expected of you. The principles of the Code are intended to:

- Maintain patient safety and public confidence in the profession,

- Underpin all other standards and guidance issued by the Society and other organisations, principally the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS),
- Inform the general public of the standards of behaviour that can be expected from the pharmacy profession, and
- Guide and support your work as a pharmacist.

Status of the Code of Ethics

The professional and personal conduct of the pharmacist will be judged against the Code. Its principles apply in all areas of pharmaceutical work. Disreputable behaviour, even if it is not directly connected to professional practice, or failure to comply with the Code's principles and obligations, will lead to a review of a member's registration.

From time to time the pharmacist may be faced with conflicting professional obligations or legal requirements. In these circumstances the pharmacist must:

- consider fully the options available,
- evaluate the risks and benefits associated with possible courses of action, and
- exercise professional judgement in the best interests of the patient and public.

Definitions

Users of pharmaceutical services

Include patients/clients, customers or service users. The concept also includes members of the public. The Code uses the term patient(s) to encompass any individuals or groups who access or are affected by your professional pharmacy services or advice.

If you offer veterinary pharmacy services, the term patient may also extend to the animals you provide services for.

A Carer

Is someone, who, without payment, provides help and support to a partner, child, relative, friend or neighbour, unable to perform unaided essential daily functions. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability.

The Eight Principles

As a pharmacist **you must**:

1. Make the welfare of patients your prime concern
2. Respect and protect confidential information
3. Show respect for others
4. Exercise professional judgement in the interests of patients and public
5. Encourage patients to participate in decisions about their care
6. Maintain and develop professional knowledge and competence
7. Act with honesty and integrity
8. Provide a good standard of practice and care at all times.

Principle 1: Make the welfare of patients your prime concern

Obligations:

- 1.1. Act in a manner designed to promote and safeguard the health and welfare of patients.
- 1.2. Protect the wellbeing of vulnerable individuals, both adults and children.
- 1.3. Ensure the provision of quality* professional services by you or those working under your direct supervision.
- 1.4. Provide appropriate treatment and care based on all the information you have available to you. Where appropriate, signpost or refer patients to other health and social care professionals and relevant organisations.
- 1.5. Ensure the clinical appropriateness of medicines supplied to patients and their safe and timely access to them.
- 1.6. Promote the effective and rational use of medicines by controlling the sale or supply of all medicinal and related products, especially those with a potential for abuse or dependency.
- 1.7. Ensure that patients, or their carers, know how to use/take their medicines properly.
- 1.8. Purchase medicines only from suppliers and sources known to be reputable to ensure the quality, safety and efficacy of products supplied to patients.
- 1.9. Complete patient records promptly and maintain them in an organised and legible form.
- 1.10. Make best use of available resources: ensure you have access to the facilities, equipment and materials necessary to provide services to professionally acceptable standards.
- 1.11. Undertake regular reviews, audits and risk assessments to improve the quality of services.

* Quality as defined by standards, competences and behaviours.

Principle 2: Respect and protect confidential information

Obligations:

- 2.1 Respect the confidentiality of information, professional or otherwise, acquired in the course of professional practice and only use it for the purposes for which it is given and in compliance with current legislation. Refer to *Guidance on Patient Confidentiality*.
- 2.2 Maintain systems which ensure security of information and prevent unauthorised access to it.
- 2.3 Ensure that all who have access to patient/client information knows and respects its confidential nature.
- 2.4 Ensure that confidential information is not disclosed without consent, except where legally permitted or where an immediate decision is required.

Principle 3: Show respect for others

Obligations:

- 3.1 Treat all others with personal and professional courtesy.
- 3.2 Maintain proper and appropriate relationships with patients and those you come into contact with during the course of your professional practice. Take special care when dealing with vulnerable individuals, both adults and children. Refer to *Guidances on Maintaining Professional Boundaries and Dealing with Vulnerable Individuals*.
- 3.3 Respect diversity in the cultural differences, beliefs and value-systems of others.
- 3.4 Ensure that your personal views about an individual's lifestyle, religious beliefs or political opinions, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability or other perceived status do not affect your treatment of, or the professional service you offer to any individual or group.
- 3.5 Refer patients to alternative providers if your religious or moral beliefs prevent you from providing a particular professional service.
- 3.6 Obtain consent for the professional services, treatment or care you provide and the patient information you use in any other context. Refer to *Guidance on Patient Consent*.
- 3.7 Respect and protect the dignity and privacy of others. All patient consultations should take place in an appropriate environment. [*Definition from The Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union: A specific area should be provided in which a conversation can be conducted in private, free of interruptions and without the possibility of being overheard*].

Principle 4: Exercise professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public

Obligations:

- 4.1 Consider and act in the best interests of individual patients and the public.
- 4.2 Challenge the judgement of colleagues and other health and social care professionals if you have justifiable reason to believe that their decisions could compromise the safety or care of others.
- 4.3 Conduct research and development with professionalism and integrity and obtain any necessary approval from the appropriate regulatory authorities.
- 4.4 Respect the skills of other healthcare professionals and work co-operatively with them for patient benefit.

Principle 5: Encourage patients to participate in decisions about their care

Obligations:

- 5.1 Respect patient choice: patients have a right to refuse to receive treatment, care or other professional services. Refer to *Guidance on Patient Consent*.
- 5.2 Patients have a right to be involved in decisions about their treatment and care: work in partnership with the patient and other members of the healthcare team to manage their treatment and care.
- 5.3 Investigate and, where possible, take steps to address factors that may prevent or deter individuals from obtaining or taking their treatment.
- 5.4 Listen to patients and their carers and respond to their needs and preferences. Ensure that, whenever possible, reasonable steps are taken to meet patient's language and communication needs.
- 5.5 Provide information that patients or their carers want or need, about their treatment and care, in a way that they can understand.
- 5.6 Keep up-to-date, and adhere to, all appropriate and current legislation pertaining to treatment and care of patients not legally competent. Refer to *Guidance on Dealing with Vulnerable Individuals*.
- 5.7 Subject to paragraph 2.4 (*Confidentiality*) ensure that information is shared appropriately with other health and social care professionals involved in the care of the patient.

Principle 6: Maintain and develop professional knowledge and competence

Obligations:

- 6.1 Undertake continuing professional development relevant to your area of practice and maintain appropriate evidence of participation.
- 6.2 Keep your knowledge and skills up to date, evidence-based and relevant to your role and responsibilities.
- 6.3 Continuously review your knowledge, skills and professional performance.
Reflect on them, identify and understand your limits as well as your strengths.
- 6.4 Only practise within your realm of competency and refer to others where necessary.
- 6.5 Practise only if you are competent to do so. Promptly inform the Society, your employer and other relevant authorities of any circumstances that may call into question your fitness to practise or bring the pharmacy profession into disrepute, including:
 - ill-health, impairing ability to practise,
 - criminal convictions, and
 - adverse findings by other regulatory bodies or organisations.

Principle 7: Act with honesty and integrity

Obligations:

- 7.1 Maintain public trust and confidence in your profession by acting with honesty, integrity and professionalism.
- 7.2 Demonstrate high standards of personal and professional conduct at all times.
- 7.3 Act immediately to remedy and rectify the situation should someone in your professional care come to harm.
- 7.4 Avoid abuse of your professional position or exploitation of the vulnerability/lack of knowledge of others.
- 7.5 Conflicts of interest are to be avoided: this precludes the reception of gifts, favours, hospitality or referrals that may compromise, or be perceived to compromise, professional judgement. Declare any personal or professional interests to those who may be affected.
- 7.6 All information provided about any aspect of your practice, whether written or spoken, should be accurate and unambiguous, with no impression of invidious distinctions between pharmacists or pharmacies.
- 7.7 Honour commitments, agreements and arrangements for the provision of professional services.

7.8 Respond to complaints and criticism with honesty, transparency and courtesy.
Refer to our *Guidance on Raising Concerns*.

Principle 8: Provide a good standard of practice and care at all times

Obligations:

Communicate, co-operate and work effectively with colleagues within and outside the profession.

Ensure that both you and those you employ/supervise have an appropriate level of language competence/skills.

Contribute to the development, education and training of colleagues and students, sharing relevant knowledge, skills and expertise. [Pre-Registration tutors must adhere to current guidance on pre-registration training].

Take responsibility for all work done by you or under your supervision. Ensure that individuals to whom you delegate tasks are competent and fit to practise and have undertaken, or are in the process of undertaking, the training required for their duties.

Be satisfied that appropriate standard operating procedures exist, are adhered to, and that clear lines of accountability and verifiable audit trails are in place.

Ensure that both you and those you employ/supervise comply with all legal and professional requirements and best practice guidance.

Ensure that workload or working conditions do not compromise patient care or public safety.

Ensure that all professional activities undertaken by you, or under your control, are covered by appropriate professional indemnity arrangements.

Ensure your place of work has an effective complaints procedure and follow it at all times. Refer to *Guidance on Raising Concerns*.

Make known to relevant persons/bodies any concerns about policies, systems, working conditions, or the actions, professional performance or health of others that are likely to compromise patient care or public safety, or are already doing so.

Co-operate with investigations into the fitness to practise of either yourself or another healthcare professional; abide by undertakings you give and/or any restrictions placed on your practice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

To be written

Supporting documents

The Code of Ethics for Pharmacists is supported by the following guidance documents which are available via the website of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, at www.psni.org.uk. Hard copies are also available by contacting the Pharmaceutical Society by telephone (02890 326 927) or by email (practice@psni.org.uk):

- Guidance on Raising Concerns
- Guidance on Maintaining Professional Boundaries
- Guidance on Patient Consent
- Guidance on Patient Confidentiality
- Guidance on Dealing with Vulnerable Individuals
- Guidance on Pharmacist Prescribing.

Other sources of Advice

Further advice on the Code or other professional or legal obligations can be obtained by contacting