



The role of pharmacy in supporting people who want to stop smoking

- Pharmacists are amongst the most accessible of all healthcare professionals
- 1.8 million people in Great Britain visit a community pharmacy every day for health related advice, making pharmacists ideally placed to provide care and support to those who want to stop smoking
- Over the counter provision of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) approximately doubles the rate at which people stop smokingⁱⁱ

Smoking is the single greatest cause of preventable illness and premature death in the UK, killing over 120,000 people a year.ⁱⁱⁱ This information sheet outlines how pharmacy can be used to help reduce this figure through its involvement in stop smoking services.

Why Pharmacy?

There is a network of over 12,000 pharmacies located where people live and work, which are easily accessible, available without appointment and are often open when other health services are closed.

Community pharmacy offers a range of medical treatments, services and advice and pharmacists are recognised across Great Britain as experts in medicines and the therapeutic management of diseases.

Pharmacists are highly trained health care professionals who undertake a four-year Masters degree followed by a year of training before qualification.

In recent years, the pharmacist's role has evolved to provide a much more clinical service that utilises their expertise in medicines. Recent developments have given pharmacists with additional training the ability to prescribe, offering huge potential to develop new services, such as running their own clinics.

Pharmacists and Smoking Support Services

The pharmacist's role in smoking cessation is not new. They have been active in this area for many years across Britain in all health sectors, providing a range of smoking cessation services and improving public health at a national level.

- Community pharmacists provide motivational support and advice, usually without the need for an appointment
- Pharmacists can provide health promotion and public health services together with signposting to other stop smoking services
- All pharmacies can provide 'over the counter' Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)
- Provision of NRT and other medication, as well as support, can be delivered through a locally negotiated service. This can be linked to existing stop smoking services provided through other programmes that often do not have the capacity to supply therapy
- As well as support and supply, pharmacists can offer one-to-one counselling to patients wishing to quit
- Hospital pharmacists visit patients on wards on a daily basis so are ideally placed to provide advice and guidance as well as signposting to other services

1 Stop smoking support services

The Evidence for Pharmacy

The RPSGB Technical Information Centre has collated a selection of key references providing evidence and examples of the positive contribution that pharmacy can make. This is available at:

www.rpsgb.org/informationresources/advisoryservices/technicalinformationservice/rpsepic.html#rpsepic

Examples of Practice

The following are examples of how pharmacy is making a difference to people's lives who want to stop smoking.

1) The Denbighshire Community Pharmacy Smoking Cessation Service

Launched in March 2006 the service has three levels based on the new community pharmacy contractual framework:

LEVEL 1: Pharmacists provide advice on quitting, provide over the counter NRT and signpost to local services.

LEVEL 2: Pharmacists will supply therapy for patients receiving counselling from the local smoking cessation service, offering additional support and reinforcement of their advice.

LEVEL 3: Pharmacists provide one-to-one assessment of a patient, initiate supply and monitor the use of appropriate smoking cessation therapy, and provide advice and support each time NRT is supplied.

Starting Fresh in Scotland

Launched in 2003 and operated by 200 (93%) community pharmacies throughout Glasgow, the scheme offers treatment, advice and support. Quit success rates four weeks after stopping have reached up to 38% and a key part of the success of the scheme is its 'drop in' approach, where clients can access NRT and support from their community pharmacy for up to 12 weeks.

www.smokingconcerns.com

Darlington Memorial Hospital

Offers a smoking cessation programme for coronary care patients

www.pjonline.com/Hospital/Editorial/200009/articles/smoking_cessation.html

What should be done now?

Across Great Britain, the new contractual frameworks provide a mechanism for new and innovative services to be provided. At a national and local level, urgent consideration should be given by those with an influence over health planning on how the benefits that pharmacy can provide in supporting patients to stop smoking are fully realised.

ⁱⁱ Raw, M. Mcneill, A et al; Smoking Cessation Guidelines for Health Professionals – A guide to effective smoking cessation interventions for the health care system; *Thorax* 1998; **53** (Suppl 5): S1-S18 (December)

ⁱⁱⁱ A White Paper on Tobacco published by The Stationery Office Prepared 30 November 1998
www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm41/4177/4177.htm [Accessed 26.10.06]