Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Law and Ethics Bulletin
Retrievable Audit Trail

Following a recent case considered by the Society's Investigating Committee, pharmacists are offered the following information in relation to maintaining a retrievable audit trail of the pharmacist responsible for the provision of each pharmacy service.

The Professional Standards for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians in Positions of Authority states that you must ensure that clear lines of accountability exist and a retrievable audit trail of the health professional taking responsibility for the provision of each pharmacy service is maintained.

When maintaining an audit trail, you are strongly advised to have systems in place that will answer the question: who did what and when? There are several ways to ensure that a verifiable audit trail is in existence:

> It is strongly recommended that you use the "dispensed by/checked by" boxes on dispensing labels. This advice is given in guidance produced by the Society entitled "Risk minimisation with regard to dispensing and checking" (www.rpsgb.org/pdfs/restoolriskmin.pdf). This will identify who checked and who dispensed the prescription. You must ensure that the initials are legible.

> You should also maintain a record of the pharmacist who undertook the clinical check. One way of doing this may be to initial the prescription.

> Maintaining a record of the pharmacist in personal control provides information on who was responsible for supplying the dispensed medicine. If there is more than one pharmacist in the pharmacy, consider other ways to identify who made the supply. Again, initials could be placed on the prescription, or on the label of the dispensed medicine.

> As technology develops; there may be ways for pharmacy computer systems to record this information.

Maintaining a verifiable audit trail is a matter of clinical governance and a Code of Ethics requirement. It protects not only the public but also you as an individual, as the audit trail assists with identifying what went wrong when an error occurs.