



COVID-19 Update

Monday 30th March 2020

This new, daily update contains important information for community pharmacy teams about the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In today's update: public urged to treat pharmacy teams with respect, PM thanks pharmacists, eRD support, media coverage, pre-registration training

Public urged to treat pharmacy teams with respect

PSNC, AIM, CCA, NPA and RPS have publicly asked patients to treat high street pharmacy staff with respect, as they deliver vital support on the NHS frontline during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a joint statement, the pharmacy organisations warned that the pandemic is already putting unprecedented pressure on pharmacy teams and the supply chain more generally. Many pharmacies are struggling to manage staff shortages (for instance where people are self-isolating) and remaining staff are working long hours to meet demand.

[Read the joint press release in full](#)

PM and Health Secretary thank pharmacists

Prime Minister Boris Johnson thanked "our wonderful pharmacists" for everything that they are doing in a [video update posted to Twitter](#) last night.

In his video, the Prime Minister recognised the importance of pharmacy teams not only for dispensing vital medicines but also for providing reassurance to those members of the public they interact with.

Similarly, Health Secretary Matt Hancock has given "a great big thank you to all pharmacists, and everyone working in pharmacies, for the work that you're doing on the frontline". Hancock's [Twitter video](#) also said that he would make sure pharmacy teams have what they need to support the public during the pandemic.

Identification of patients eligible for eRD

To help support the response to COVID-19, the NHS Business Services Authority (NHSBSA) is introducing a system to automatically identify patients that may be eligible for electronic Repeat Dispensing (eRD).

Increasing eRD has many benefits, such as reducing footfall in GP practices and pharmacies, reducing workload and allowing for better management of the supply chain. Many of these are particularly desirable during the current situation, as has been recognised by the NHS in its primary care response to the pandemic (see [Dr Nikki Kanani's 5th March letter to general practices](#)).

Wessex Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) has worked with the NHSBSA to develop a process that would provide GP practices with the NHS number for certain patients that have had the same medicines dispensed to them for the previous 12 months.

Practices moving to eRD **must** discuss their plans with local community pharmacies and, similarly, CCGs embarking on moving patients to eRD **must** discuss plans with their LPC prior to switching.

Where GP practices have an active [nhs.net](#) email address, they will be sent a file containing [details of patients within specified criteria](#). A clinician should review the practice's records of those patients to ensure that they are indeed appropriate for eRD before moving them onto the system.

Media coverage

The hard work undertaken by pharmacy teams has been highlighted in the national media over the past week and, today, [The Times](#) reported that small pharmacies are facing closure as a result of drug price rises. PSNC was referenced in the article.

Other national media coverage has included:

BBC News featured a video piece, [Inside a pharmacy coping with coronavirus](#), in which Marc Borson, a community pharmacist in Manchester, explains what it is like on the frontline.

[iNews](#) reported that pharmacies are urging people to stop stockpiling medicines and medical devices.

[The Mail](#) reported that pharmacies are worried they have been 'completely forgotten' by the government due to inadequate supplies of PPE.

[The Sun](#) reported that pharmacies are running critically low on crucial drugs after the paper saw an urgent memo to Boots staff which warned that that its supplies of paracetamol could be exhausted by the end of the week.

Pre-registration training

Following the recent General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) announcement to postpone both the June and September 2020 pre-registration pharmacist examinations, Health Education England (HEE), along with the Statutory Education Bodies Scotland and Wales, has published a [joint statement](#) outlining its support for the proposed approach and its continued engagement in exploring the processes needed to support current pre-registration pharmacists.

Keep up-to-date with our hub page: psnc.org.uk/coronavirus

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