



**Royal
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Society
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News release

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THOUSANDS OF PHARMACISTS JOIN CALL FOR ORIGINAL PACK DISPENSING

The unified voice of almost 4,000 pharmacists has given the Society a powerful mandate for action when they gave their views in a survey on dispensing medicines to patients in original packs.

The Society's English Pharmacy Board (EPB) kicked off the national call for original pack dispensing at the end of last year in a bid to improve medicines safety for patients and to reduce wastage.

Survey results released today to gauge the feeling amongst the profession show that pharmacists are strongly behind this initiative with 65 per cent saying that snipping packs to supply the right amount was a significant problem. Currently community pharmacists frequently dispense medicines from manufacturers' original packs when the pack size does not correspond to the prescribed quantity.

Ninety one per cent of survey correspondents (3,551 pharmacists) said accessing and providing an additional Patient Information Leaflet was one of the problems with not being able to use original packs. Other chosen survey answers included the increased time taken to dispense some items (80.3%), mixed batches and packaging leading to a loss of patient confidence in medicine effectiveness (79.1%) and feeling that snipping tablets is unprofessional (77.8%).

RPSGB Director for England, Howard Duff says; “We know the impact that cutting up an original pack can have on a patient’s ability to take medicine correctly either through lost instructions or the possibility of mixed batches.

“It is also time consuming for the pharmacist and can contribute to medicines wastage. We’ve now had a clear signal from the profession that this issue is important to them and we intend to campaign for change.”

The majority of pharmacists thought supplying the most appropriate original pack and being reimbursed accordingly (86.6%) was the solution, this was followed by ‘ensuring all medication is produced in pack sizes equivalent to an agreed 28 day month’ (72.7%) and third choice was ‘ensure all prescriptions always match an original pack for chronic condition treatment’ (48%).

A meeting was held on Friday, chaired by Professor Nick Barber, to allow representatives from community pharmacy, hospital pharmacy, primary care organisations, and academia to evaluate survey results and the issues raised. Workshops included exploring the positive and negative sides to change, discussing interesting scenarios if original pack dispensing was in place along with looking at solutions and barriers to the problem.

The consensus agreed that community pharmacists in England should have the ability to dispense original packs where it’s appropriate for their patients and to be reimbursed for what they dispense.

The Society’s next step will be to work with the new English Pharmacy Board members on how it can use the powerful voice of its members and other stakeholders to influence the government to implement original pack dispensing.

Ends

**For media enquiries please contact the
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Notes to editor

Survey results are available on request by emailing michelle.hyland@rpsgb.org