



Royal  
Pharmaceutical  
Society  
of Great Britain

## **Consultation on amendments to *Professional standards and guidance for the sale and supply of medicines*:**

### **Pandemic flu**

#### **Background**

The Department of Health launched an initial consultation to consider changes to medicines and other legislation in the event of a pandemic flu. The Department of Health states that the key expected outcome of an influenza pandemic is that a lot more people than normal are likely to feel ill and will want to receive advice, care, support and/or medicines or healthcare products.

One issue, which has been considered in planning, is that there might be situations when some medicines are in short supply and pharmacists would need to look at how their patients can continue to access them. Community pharmacies have very efficient systems for the supply of medicines but these might be vulnerable in the event of an influenza pandemic. It is possible that, due to disruptive circumstances outside your control (both inside and outside the UK), there might be shortages of some medicines. Pharmacies will need to work with their primary care organisations (PCOs) on planning to help them overcome problems at a local level.

The joint response (from the RPSGB, CCA, NPA, PSNC, AIMp, CPS and CPW) to this consultation can be viewed at [www.rpsgb.org](http://www.rpsgb.org)

It is important to recognise that any amendments to the standards and guidance documents would only be for the duration of the pandemic flu at certain levels, and would not allow for the supply of date expired medicines or patient returned medicines as a matter of routine course.

#### **A: Date expired medicines**

In the Department of Health consultation it was recognised that some medicines do not degrade at the licensed expiry date given on the packaging and remain effective for a period after this date. It is therefore proposed that in the emergency situation of WHO Phase 6 – UK alert level 2, where there was a shortage of such a medicine, allowing discretion on its continued supply after the expiry date could help ease the effect of such a shortage and benefit patients, provided that the patient had been informed and had consented to such a supply.

*Professional standards and guidance for the sale and supply of medicines* currently states that date expired stock is segregated from the rest of the pharmacy stock and appropriately disposed of.

## **B: Patient returned medicines**

In the Department of Health initial consultation, it was recognised that some patients return unused and unwanted medicines to the pharmacy for safe disposal. Many of these medicines are still within their expiry date and in their original packaging. Under the Codes of Ethics of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland, medicines cannot be reused once they leave the pharmacy and must be disposed of. However, it is proposed that in the emergency situation of WHO Phase 6 – UK alert level 2, in the emergency situation described above, the reuse of some unwanted returned medicines, if still in their original packaging and looking fit for purpose, could again ease the shortage of supply. Decisions on the reuse of returned medicines could rest with the professional judgement of a pharmacist or other healthcare professional who could advise patients accordingly.

*Professional standards and guidance for the sale and supply of medicines* currently states that medicines returned to a pharmacy from a patient's home, a care home or similar institution are not supplied to another patient. While awaiting disposal, these medicines must be clearly marked and segregated from other stock.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain would like to hear your views on the questions set out in the questionnaire on these proposed amendments.

The questionnaire is available both online and as a pdf.

Completed questionnaire forms should be sent to Priya Sejpal, RPSGB, 1 Lambeth High Street London SE1 7JN (e-mail [priya.sejpal@rpsgb.org](mailto:priya.sejpal@rpsgb.org)), to arrive by **20 June 2008**.