Pharmacy Schools Council
Statement on strengthening the NHS constitution

The Pharmacy Schools Council (PhSC) represents the collective interests and views of all 26 UK schools of pharmacy by providing a source of informed opinion and advice on all matters concerning pharmacy education from the perspective of UK schools of pharmacy.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on strengthening the NHS constitution. These amendments have a role in clarifying the common purpose of those working in the NHS to help meet the growing expectations of patients and the public. The constitution is particularly pertinent to pharmacists due to the increasing demands and expectations placed on the profession.

Pharmacy as a profession
The demands placed on a pharmacist are growing and the profession is seen to be integral to saving resources within primary care through the provision of accessible healthcare.[1]

Indeed, pharmacy cannot just be seen as the simple packaging and distribution of drugs; rather it has an important role to play in a number of areas, including:

- advising patients about medicines, including how to take them, what reactions may occur and answering questions
- supervising the medicines supply chain and ensuring that systems are fit for purpose
- supervising the production and preparation of medicines and assessments of quality before they are supplied to patients from pharmaceutical manufacturers
- providing services such as smoking cessation, blood pressure measurement and cholesterol management. [2]

Further promoting and expanding the role of pharmacy in a clinical setting shall therefore undoubtedly help to address the challenges facing the NHS, namely the need to create efficiencies when faced with an aging population with increased co-morbidities.

It is important to note that whilst not all pharmacists work directly for the NHS, with 70-75% of pharmacists working in the community and in other areas such as prisons, the military and private organisations, all need to demonstrate a high level of patient care and professional standards.

The strengthened NHS constitution emphasises the need to treat patients with dignity, care and compassion, while also ensuring that staff are valued and receive the support and motivation required for them to demonstrate strong patient care.

This essential focus on patient care is an integral aspect of pharmacy education.

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[1] General Pharmaceutical Council (2011) *Future pharmacist: Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists*

[2] General Pharmaceutical Council, Home, About Us, What we do, Role of Regulation, http://pharmacyregulation.org/about-us/what-we-do/role-regulation/who-we-regulate (date last accessed 25/01/2013)

Making every contact count
The revisions to the constitution emphasise that healthcare professionals should make the most of every contact with patients, further demonstrating the potential offered by an accessible pharmacy service.

The proposals encompassed within the Modernising Pharmacy Careers workstream supports this development through the recommendation that students have greater access to work-based learning and contact with patients at an earlier stage within their MPharm degree.

The education provided by our members plays a vital role in ensuring that future pharmacists are well equipped to effectively carry out the increased responsibilities being ascribed to them, through both the selection of students onto an MPharm course and the development of students' clinical skills.

Integrated Care:
A further relevant amendment in the constitution is the recommendation that care should be integrated and focused on the needs of the patient. Integrating care should also consider how information about patients' medicines can be appropriately communicated between different organisations. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society's report *Keeping patients safe when they transfer between care providers – getting the medicines right* further explores this issue.[3]

In order to ensure that pharmacists can operate effectively within the healthcare team, we fully support the following proposed new pledge 'To ensure those involved in your care and treatment have access to your data so they can care for you safely and effectively'. It is important that pharmacists have at least partial access to patient medication records to help them perform the important roles of medicines optimisation and health promotion.

Furthermore, there is the opportunity for the fifth principle of the NHS that 'the NHS works in partnership with other organisations' to also emphasise that this should be pursued with a concern for patient safety.

For further information, please contact Emily Burn, Policy Officer, Pharmacy Schools Council at admin@pharmacyschoolscouncil.ac.uk

[3] Royal Pharmaceutical Society, *Keeping patients safe when they transfer between care providers – getting the medicines right*, (2011).