

Community Pharmacist – a career of choice in Scotland

What is a Pharmacist – A pharmacist is an expert in medicines and their use. Their knowledge of medicines and the effect they have on the human body is critical to the management of every type of medical condition. Pharmacists are responsible for the quality of medicines supplied to a patient, advising patients about medicines, responding to symptoms in the pharmacy and giving appropriate advice and recommending treatments or referral, and provide services to patients such as stop smoking, blood pressure monitoring and cholesterol management. Being a Pharmacist is being a Professional registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council.

What do we mean by a community pharmacy? A community pharmacy is a pharmacy that deals directly with people in the local area. It has responsibilities including compounding, counselling, checking and dispensing of prescription drugs to the patients with care, accuracy, and legality. From here the Pharmacist carries out an important role in supporting local patients, carers, and families with key public health messages. A community pharmacy has appropriate procurement, storage, dispensing and documentation of medicines. It is an important branch of the pharmacy profession and involves a registered pharmacist with the education, skills, and competence to deliver the professional service to the community. Community pharmacists work at the front line of healthcare in cities, towns, and villages.

The role of community pharmacy - Community pharmacy is an important primary care healthcare provider in Scotland. There are approx. 1250 community pharmacies across the country. More than 80% of the population is likely to be only 20 min walk from a pharmacy in most areas. Furthermore, pharmacists may usually be seen without an appointment. This level of access means that community pharmacies have potentially considerable impact on provision of health services. As well as supply of prescription and over-the-counter medicines, community pharmacies have been increasingly providing clinically-focused enhanced pharmacy services such as treatment for uncomplicated urinary tract infections, skin conditions, smoking cessation advice and treatment, flu vaccinations, travel vaccinations, emergency contraception, health screening services, and many more.

As experts in the actions, formulation and practical use of medicines, community pharmacists have an important role in advising on safe and effective use of medicines, providing services for medicines review, management of long-term conditions, and public health/screening services.

More about the role of the pharmacist in pharmacy service provision in Scotland

A. NHS Pharmacy First

This service focuses on increasing access to community pharmacy as the first port of call for managing self-limiting illnesses and supporting self-management of stable long term conditions in and out of hours and to improve pharmaceutical care and contribute to the multi-disciplinary team. During a consultation with the pharmacist or one of the pharmacy team we assess and respond to symptoms and recommend an action which may include the supply of an appropriate treatment or referral to another healthcare professional.

B. Medicines: Care & Review

Allows patients with long-term conditions to register with a Community Pharmacy of their choice for the provision of pharmaceutical care. This is a 3-stage process:

Stage one - Those with long-term conditions register with a Community Pharmacy of their choice. They can only register with one pharmacy at any one time. This is voluntary and includes an informed patient consent process which is given to the registering pharmacist.

Stage two - The pharmacist assesses those patients to identify and prioritise individuals or groups of patients with unmet care needs. They then identify and record the patient's needs, care issues, any desired outcomes and the actions required to meet them. These are documented in a pharmaceutical care plan.

Stage three - If appropriate, a patient's General Practitioner (GP) produces a 24, 48 or 56-week serial prescription to be dispensed at an interval indicated by the GP. Details are sent back to the GP practice after each dispensing by the Community Pharmacy has been submitted.

C. Public Health Services - Some examples of the contribution of pharmacists to health protection, health improvement and medicine safety.

1. Smoking cessation service is a patient friendly, non-judgmental, confidential advice service to help customers stop smoking.
2. Emergency Hormonal Contraceptive Service - Supporting a sexual health service comprising of the supply of emergency hormonal contraception.
3. Gluten Free Food Service is a Community Pharmacy-led supply service for patients with a confirmed diagnosis of either Coeliac disease or Dermatitis Herpetiformis.

Other local services provided by community pharmacists include:

- Advice to Residential Homes.
- Support for people with substance misuse issues.
- Injecting equipment provision (Needle exchange)
- Disposal of Unwanted Medicines
- **What does a community pharmacist in Scotland do?**
 - Works closely with GPs, nurses and other healthcare professionals to give advice on how to choose medicines for patients and how to use them safely. Often advising on dosage and suggesting the most appropriate form of medication such as tablet, injection, ointment, or inhaler
 - provide information to patients on how get the maximum benefit from the medicines they are prescribed and how use their medicines safely. Provide information on side effects of medicines
 - advise on the most effective treatments for a particular condition including those for sale without prescription
 - help patients manage long term conditions eg asthma, blood pressure and diabetes
 - many offer services in community pharmacy eg blood pressure testing, flu vaccination, travel vaccination, emergency hormonal contraception service
 - **Career prospects in community pharmacy** Promotion will usually involve management of specific service areas, such as managing staff other than pharmacists, including accuracy checking pharmacy technicians and sales assistants. If you are working for a major chain of pharmacies, there may be opportunities to progress to branch and then area/regional manager roles. At the most senior level you could be working as a pharmacy superintendent, influencing the running of the business and contributing to overall strategy, with responsibility for many pharmacists. There are also opportunities to move into management roles in areas such as business, professional development, policy, standards and governance and relationship management.

University Entry Requirements – In Scotland you can study for a Masters degree in Pharmacy at Strathclyde University or Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen.

Strathclyde requirements - <https://digital.ucas.com/coursedisplay/courses/b88e7e65-4017-9bad-63e0-6262a750d7f0>

Scottish Higher

AAAB

Chemistry A, Biology A, Maths B, English B.

Scottish Advanced Higher

BB

Chemistry B and/or Biology; Physics and Maths considered.

RGU requirements - <https://www.rgu.ac.uk/study/courses/883-mpharm-pharmacy>

SQA Higher: AAB/ABBB to include Chemistry plus two further sciences from Biology/Human Biology, Maths or Physics at grade B. Higher English (or a written subject requiring the use of English) at a minimum of grade C

What salary can I expect as a community pharmacist? As a pre-registration pharmacist in Scotland (this is your year of practice under supervision before your final professional exam) £23,113 (2020). In community pharmacy a newly qualified pharmacist salary is in the region of £38,000 pa rising to an excess of £50,000 dependant on experience, further qualifications, and geography.