

Helping Pharmacists provide better treatment and care for drug users

20 March 2006

The National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (NTA), the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) and the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (PSNC) have published guidance on commissioning pharmaceutical services for drug users.

This new guidance for England, Best practice guidance for commissioners and providers of pharmaceutical services to drug users, will help commissioners and pharmacists to deliver better pharmaceutical services to drug users.

Paul Hayes, Chief Executive of the NTA, said: "Pharmacists play a very important role in the provision of treatment and care to drug misusers, by dispensing drugs as part of supervised consumption arrangements and by offering needle exchange services. "

Although there are more than 14 million face-to-face contacts between pharmacists and drug misusers each year, the Audit Commissions report Changing habits, identified pharmacists as an underused point of contact for the drug misusing population.

The NTA has produced new guidance to assist commissioners and pharmacists in improving and increasing the level of provision.

David Pruce, Director of Practice and Quality Improvement, RPSGB, said: "This guidance will help pharmacists to promote their public health role in the area of drug misuse management. It provides advice for commissioners on services available from pharmacy and also includes background information on how pharmacy is funded. The guidance is important for drug users as it will help to ensure that any services commissioned are of the highest standard. "

Alastair Buxton, Head of NHS Services, PSNC, said: "Community pharmacies have provided services to drug users for a great many years. This guidance helps to highlight this important role to service commissioners and draws together the key issues that need to be considered when a service is being implemented at a local level. The guidance will help commissioners and pharmacies provide high quality services to drug users."

It is anticipated that :

- 75% of community pharmacies will need to be involved in providing supervised consumption and shared care schemes for drug users and
- 25% of community pharmacies will need to be providing pharmacy needle exchange services to meet the needs of drug users.

About the Guidance

This is the first guidance produced jointly by the NTA and RPSGB specifically for those involved in commissioning and providing pharmaceutical services and pulls together the many changes in legislation which have taken place since the NTA was first formed. The guidance has been developed in collaboration with and endorsed by the PSNC.

An invaluable reference, for commissioners the guidance:

Provides information on the new pharmacy contract, emphasising the need for commissioners to work with primary care trusts and primary care organisations, local pharmaceutical committees, specialist services and pharmacists working in secondary care;

Explains how community pharmacies are paid and includes plans outlining how payments for enhanced services will be calculated by means of special pricing toolkits which are currently being worked on by the NHS Confederation and the PSNC;

Includes the DH and PSNC enhanced service specification on pharmacy needle exchange, supervised consumption of prescribed medicines and supplementary prescribing;

Clarifies current and future roles for pharmacists in the provision of services to substance users, including proposed plans for pharmacists with special interest and consultant pharmacists; and

Highlights the important role that coordinators of needle exchange and shared care play in ensuring pharmaceutical services

are integrated with other services.

For providers of services, including needle exchange and shared care coordinators, the guidance:

Provides a detailed description of commissioner expectations of pharmacists providing pharmaceutical services; and

Emphasises the important roles of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in secondary care, specialist services and PCTs in ensuring the medicines management standards for drug users are of the same high quality as provided for all other patients using their services.

For service users, this guidance will help ensure that:

Pharmaceutical services commissioned are of the highest quality;

Users will benefit from increased access to a healthcare professional on the high street; and

Users are provided with the same high quality medicines management services as experienced in specialist services.

This guidance will ensure that commissioners and providers of pharmaceutical services to drug users will have a common reference document. The NTA aims to ensure commissioners fully understand the way pharmacists are required to work by their professional governing body and to assist pharmacists in ensuring that the services they provide for all other members of the public are equally available to drug misusers.

By linking commissioning of pharmaceutical services for drug misusers to the other services provided by pharmacists it is expected that pharmaceutical care of drug misusers will increasingly become part of mainstream services. This is especially important in ensuring drug misusers are not prevented from accessing the healthcare that is available to the general population, whether in primary or secondary care.

Best practice guidance for commissioners and providers of pharmaceutical services to drug users is available on the following websites NTA (www.nta.nhs.uk), RPSGB (www.rpsgb.org) and PSNC (www.psnc.org.uk).

To download a copy of the guidance go to .

Source: www.nta.nhs.uk

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