Consultation skills for pharmacy practice: taking a patient-centred approach

A CPPE distance learning programme for pharmacy professionals
About this learning programme

Welcome to the CPPE distance learning programme Consultation skills for pharmacy practice: taking a patient-centred approach, which forms the first step in the learning pathway for developing the consultation skills of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in all sectors of pharmacy.

In 2012, proposals were issued as part of the Modernising Pharmacy Careers (MPC) programme to help strengthen and develop the careers of post-registration pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. The proposals included the need to enhance the skills of pharmacy professionals in working with patients, other healthcare professionals and members of the public to improve the safety, value and effectiveness of medicines through medicines optimisation, and to enhance their skills in the delivery of public health interventions. Enhancing the communication and consultation skills of pharmacy professionals was identified as a key priority and has led to the development of a set of practice standards for consultation skills which set out the standard of knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of all pharmacy professionals in order for them to carry out effective patient-centred consultations. This is supported by a national learning and development programme, which is hosted on a new website (www.consultationskillsforpharmacy.com). The website outlines the different steps a pharmacy professional should take in developing their practice to ensure that they are the best they can be when speaking with and consulting with patients.

Oversight of work being taken forward as part of the MPC legacy, including the Consultation skills for pharmacy practice learning and development programme, has now transferred to Health Education England (HEE) and forms part of HEE’s national programmes.

The Consultation skills for pharmacy practice learning pathway is outlined below and poses the following questions in relation to your consultation skills education and training needs.

How do I know what standard is expected of me?

A set of national practice standards for consultation skills has been developed. As a pharmacy professional, it is your responsibility to take steps to meet these standards. This learning programme will support you in meeting some of the national practice standards, but due to the nature of the topic, you will need to complement your learning by putting it into practice with face-to-face training and peer review.

How do I know how effective my consultation skills are now?

There are a range of options available for you to establish how effective your current practice is when conducting medicines and public health consultations. The Consultation skills for pharmacy practice website provides guidance and evidence-based tools on how to self-assess and suggestions about how to work together with your team and peers to improve practice, take feedback from patients and critique others. These steps will contribute to your own personal development portfolio and are essential in improving your performance.
How do I improve my performance?

People learn in different ways, and with that in mind, we recommend a set of learning steps to help you achieve your development goal. There are many learning options (set out in detail on the Consultation skills for pharmacy practice website), as we recognise that people will be at different stages of their development journey. Completing a learning programme or attending a consultation skills workshop should not be the end of your learning journey.

How can I check my learning and development?

Developing effective consultation skills should be part of everyday practice. There is always the opportunity to improve and learn new skills and techniques and your learning should be ongoing. Working through the online assessment process will provide you with reassurance that you can recognise good practice versus poor practice or practice which can be improved. The assessment runs via the CPPE website and is available to all pharmacy professionals.

How do I continue to develop my performance?

As a healthcare professional, you have a responsibility to continually revisit your personal development. We are all fallible and bad habits can soon creep into routine practice.

Maintaining a portfolio of your professional development in relation to the consultations you conduct will provide evidence to others of the steps you have taken to improve your practice and highlight the areas in which you need to develop further. This can include completing and revisiting the self-assessment, feedback from colleagues, patients and other healthcare professionals and reflecting on individual consultations.

At this stage of the process there are options for you to regularly reassess your performance and identify opportunities to further improve your approach to consultations.

To find out more about the Consultation skills for pharmacy practice learning and development programme, visit: www.consultationskillsforpharmacy.com

Aim

The overall aim of this programme is to support you in developing your consultation skills in order to conduct effective consultations which integrate a patient-centred approach to everyday practice. By improving your consultation skills you will make a positive contribution to the lives of your patients, work towards improving patient outcomes and ensure that you are the best you can be when speaking with patients.
Learning objectives

When you have completed this programme you should be able to:

- explain the concept of patient-centred care
- describe the key communication and consultation skills and techniques required to conduct patient-centred care
- apply methods to assess your own practice and identify areas of improvement
- incorporate patient-centred care into your everyday practice
- adapt your consultation style to individual patients and the context of practice within which you work
- explore patient knowledge, understanding and concerns during the consultation
- support patients, by using a patient-centred approach, to help them get the best from their medicines and/or in making healthy lifestyle choices
- offer patients the opportunity to be involved in decisions around their own healthcare
- take your practice one step further by exploring tools and techniques, such as health coaching
- continually review your practice relating to consultation skills and identify areas for development.

Working through this programme

As a pharmacy professional you will be taking an increasingly patient-facing role as part of your everyday practice. Your current knowledge of the patient-centred consultation will depend on your previous learning on this topic and your existing experience of talking with patients in practice. Many pharmacy undergraduate courses include an element of communication and consultation skills training, but this has not always been the case and some pharmacists may have had little or no training in consultation skills. Similarly, pharmacy technicians may have a varying range of experience in consultation skills training.

With this in mind, we have developed this programme as a flexible resource. We have set out a ‘road map’ overleaf showing the six sections and indicating different learning routes you can take, depending on your existing level of knowledge, skills and experience in consultation skills. Each section includes exercises to support you in translating your knowledge into practice; helpful for all learners even if you are working through a particular section as a revision exercise.

The programme aims to provide a balance of background theory and practical tools that you can ‘test drive’ in practice. As you read through the programme consider the information and how it applies to you personally – how will it enable you to move forward and develop your practice?

Remember the aim of your hard work is to feel confident to meet the challenges facing you in your daily practice. Bear this in mind as you work through this programme – it will help you to decide if your approach to study is working.
Although we have designed the programme for self-study, as you progress through the sections it will be essential for you to talk through some of the issues with your colleagues and complement your learning with face-to-face training and peer review.

We acknowledge that people will have different levels of knowledge, skills and experience for each topic in this distance learning programme. Follow the road map below to help you identify your learning needs.

**ROUTE PLANNING**

- **Red**: This route gives you the chance to work through topics which contain the fundamental knowledge and skills for your consultation practice.
- **Blue**: Take this route if you are confident about the fundamentals of effective communication.
- **Green**: Take this route if you feel sure you can support your patients with medicines optimisation and medicines adherence.
- **Orange**: Don’t miss this detour to advance your skills and access useful tools for your practice.
- **Purple**: This route takes you through the three core sections of this programme, which all pharmacy professionals need to work through.

**Note**: Once you have finished working through your chosen sections we recommend all pharmacy professionals complete Section 6 – Moving your practice forward.