Community Pharmacy Thames Valley

Introduction to Community Pharmacy
Work Experience Student
Answer Book

Student information

Name:	
School:	
Placement dates:	
Pharmacy name & address:	
Supervisor's name:	

Key Roles in the Pharmacy

Match the role to its description:

Pharmacist	Checks prescriptions, gives advice, and ensures safety
Pharmacy Technician	Works with the pharmacist to manage dispensary functions
Dispenser	Helps the pharmacist prepare and label medicines
Counter Assistant	Gives advice on over-the-counter medicines

What other roles work in the pharmacy and what is their main responsibility?

Role	Responsibility
Accuracy Checking Technician (ACT)	A trained pharmacy technician who can also accuracy check prescriptions, and ensures safety
Superintendent Pharmacist	A registered pharmacist who holds overall responsibility for the safe and effective management of medicines within a pharmacy
Pharmacy Delivery Driver	Responsible for the safe and timely transportation of medications, prescriptions, and other pharmaceutical supplies from a pharmacy to various locations, including patients' homes
Pharmacy Manager	Oversees all operations of a pharmacy, ensuring the safe dispensing of medications, managing staff, and maintaining inventory

Medicines and the Law

Do you know what different classifications of medicines mean? See if you can find out:

Classification	What does this mean?
GSL	General Sales List (Medicines that can be sold in retail outlets like supermarkets and corner shops, as well as pharmacies).
P	Pharmacy (Medicines that can only be purchased from a registered pharmacy and under the supervision of a Pharmacist).
POM	Prescription Only Medicine (Medicines that can only be obtained with a prescription).

Look at the packaging of the following medicines in the pharmacy and see if you can find their classifications:

Medicine Name	Classification (GSL, P, POM)
Sudafed (Pseudoephedrine Hydrochloride tablets)	P
Pyrocalm Control (Omeprazole tablets)	GSL
Istin (Amlodipine tablets)	POM

A Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC) is a document describing the properties and the officially approved conditions of use of a medicine. Try to find the classifications of the following medicines using their SmPCs available here: https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc. You will find this under the 'About Medicine' heading:

Medicine Name	Classification (GSL, P, POM)
Kwells (Hyoscine Hydrobromide tablets)	P
Sumatriptan 100mg tablets	POM
Imodium Original (Loperamide Hydrochloride capsules)	GSL

What is a Controlled Drug?

A medicine that is tightly controlled by the government because it may be abused or cause addiction. Controlled drugs have special requirements / controls for how they are stored in the pharmacy and distributed.

What classification is a Controlled Drug?

✅ Tick below:

- ☐ GSL
- ☐ P
- ☐ POM

Communication Skills

See if you can answer the following questions:

How do staff make sure they speak clearly and professionally to patients?

- Use plain language, avoiding jargon
- Maintain eye contact and positive body language
- Speak at a steady pace
- Check for understanding

List two ways staff keep patient information private:

1. Conducting conversations in private or semi-private areas.

2. Not discussing patient details with unauthorised individuals.

What would you do if you heard something private about a patient?

You must not share it with anyone else (confidentiality is a legal and professional requirement).

Inform your supervisor if you're unsure.

In Pharmacy we use a lot of questions to help a patient.
What is an "open" question? Give an example of one you have heard:

A question that encourages detailed responses.

Example: 'How have you been feeling lately?'

What is a “closed” question? Give an example of one you have heard.

A question that leads to a yes/no or short answer.

Example: 'Do you have a fever?'

Non-Prescription Medicines (GSL & POM)

During this activity, you will spend some time looking at the variety of different medicines that can be purchased without a prescription. You will need to spend approximately 20-25 minutes on the shop floor looking at the specific products and gathering information needed to answer some of the questions.

You may need to use other references in your own time to fully complete the remaining questions, for example the pharmacological action (how it works) and therapeutic class (type of medication / what it is used for).

The most common illnesses people have are minor ailments e.g. cough/cold, eye infections, headache, hayfever, skin conditions etc. Community pharmacy teams have expertise in supporting the public to manage these conditions. This includes identifying more serious conditions that would require referral to the GP, A&E etc.

Why do you think the public often prefer to come to a pharmacy to manage their minor ailments instead of visiting their GP?

- It's quicker - You don't need an appointment, so you can usually get help on the same day.
- It's more convenient - Many pharmacies are open early, late, and even on weekends.
- It saves GP time - By dealing with minor issues, pharmacists help reduce the workload for GPs, so doctors can focus on more serious conditions.
- It's free - Advice is free and many minor treatments can be provided under NHS services like Pharmacy First.
- You can get medicines straight away - If you need a medicine the pharmacy has it usually in stock there so there's no delay in starting treatment.

General Sales List medicines (GSL)

You will find a variety of cough and cold remedies.

Find a compound cold remedy (i.e. a "one product does all" medicine) to treat cold or flu symptoms and list all the product's active ingredients (what is in it).

e.g. Lemsip Max Cold & Flu Capsules

- Paracetamol - helps to reduce pain (like sore throat or headache) and lower fever.
- Caffeine - helps you feel more awake.
- Phenylephrine hydrochloride - helps to reduce a blocked nose by shrinking swollen blood vessels.

Have a look at children's cough and cold remedies and list the main ingredients of products for children under 6-yrs old compared to those over 6 yrs. Make sure you note the name of the product as well as its active ingredients (what is in it).

1) Under 6 y/o e.g: CalCough Infant Syrup
Glycerol - soothes the throat
Sucrose - helps coat the throat and ease coughing
-These are gentle, soothing ingredients. Medicines with 'decongestants' or strong cough suppressants are not recommended for this age group due to safety concerns.

2) Over 6 y/o e.g: Benylin Children's Chesty Cough
Guaifenesin - helps loosen mucus in the chest (makes coughs more productive / helps clear mucus)
Sucrose - adds sweetness and helps coat the throat
-Older children can be given stronger medicines like 'expectorants' (e.g. guaifenesin) but only under adult supervision and in the correct dose.

Medicines for young children are made to be safe and simple. As children get older, slightly stronger ingredients can be used — but always with care and pharmacist advice.

Find out the role of the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency.

The MHRA is the UK organisation that checks if medicines and medical devices are safe, high quality, and effective.

All medicines in the UK have a Marketing Authorisation (or Product Licence number). Why is this important?

A Marketing Authorisation (also called a Product Licence) means that a medicine has been checked and approved by the MHRA before it can be distributed. This is important because it helps keep patients safe. It makes sure that medicines in the UK are trustworthy, effective, and made to high standards.

Locate products to treat indigestion.
Find either "Pyrocalm Control®" or "Omeprazole tablets".

What is the dose for this medicine?

The recommended dose is 20 mg once daily for up to 14 days.

What age of patient can the OTC product be use taken / used by?

Not for use by children or adolescents under 18 years OTC.

Compare this to other similar products used for indigestion.

e.g. Gaviscon
How it works: Neutralises stomach acid and forms a protective layer.
How fast it works: Within minutes.
Age: Usually age 12+, some versions suitable for 6+ (check label).

What self-care advice would you give a patient requesting medicines for indigestion?

1) Avoid spicy, fatty, or rich foods - these can irritate the stomach.
2) Don't lie down straight after eating - Wait 2–3 hours before going to bed.
3) Raise the head of your bed - If you get indigestion at night, sleeping slightly upright can help.
4) Cut down on caffeine, alcohol, and fizzy drinks - These can trigger symptoms.
5) Avoid smoking - Smoking can make heartburn and indigestion worse.
6) Maintain a healthy weight - Being overweight can put pressure on the stomach.
7) Try to manage stress - Anxiety and stress can affect digestion.

Pharmacy Medicines (P)

Locate products to treat nasal congestion.
Find either "Sudafed®" or "Pseudoephedrine Decongestant Tablets".

What is the dose for this medicine?

1 tablet (60mg) every 4 - 6 hours up to 4 times a day.

What age of patient can the OTC product be taken / used by?

12+ for OTC.

What group(s) of patients and medicines would you be most concerned about when considering sales of this product?

Patients with certain conditions because pseudoephedrine can raise blood pressure or heart rate:

- Cardiovascular diseases including high blood pressure (Hypertension)
- Diabetes
- Overactive thyroid (Hyperthyroidism)
- Glaucoma
- Kidney disease/failure

Interactions with other medicines (e.g. other decongestants, beta-blockers, or Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)).

What is the maximum amount, in number of tablets, that can legally be sold in the UK?

12 tablets (no more than 720 mg pseudoephedrine total per sale).

Why is this limit in place?

It prevents misuse as pseudoephedrine can be used illegally to make methamphetamine (crystal meth).

Compare this to other similar products used for nasal congestion.

NHS Services in the Pharmacy

✅ Tick any services you've seen offered at your pharmacy:

- ☐ NHS Prescription Dispensing
- ☐ Flu Vaccinations
- ☐ Emergency Contraception
- ☐ Blood Pressure Checks
- ☐ Smoking cessation
- ☐ New Medicine Service (NMS)

Choose one and describe what it is and why it's useful:

NHS Prescription Dispensing
What it is: When the pharmacy prepares and gives you the medicine your doctor has prescribed.
Why it's useful: Makes sure you get the right medicine safely, with advice on how to use it.

Flu Vaccinations
What it is: a yearly injection to protect people from getting the flu.
Why it's useful: Helps protect you and others from a serious illness, especially older people and those with health conditions who are more at risk of complications from getting the flu.

Emergency Contraception
What it is: A medicine to help prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex.
Why it's useful: Gives people a chance to avoid an unplanned pregnancy. It's private and fast to access in a pharmacy.

Blood Pressure Checks
What it is: The pharmacy checks how hard your heart is working to pump blood through your body.
Why it's useful: High blood pressure often has no symptoms but can lead to serious problems like heart attacks or strokes. Catching it early and controlling it can help prevent this.

Smoking Cessation
What it is: A service to help people stop smoking, including advice and sometimes nicotine replacement.
Why it's useful: Supports people to quit smoking, which improves their health and reduces risks e.g. cancer and lung disease.

New Medicine Service
What it is: Extra support from a pharmacist when someone starts a new medicine for a long-term condition (like asthma or diabetes).
Why it's useful: It helps patients understand their medicine and use it correctly. It also helps catch any problems like side effects early.

Pharmacy First

What is Pharmacy First?

Pharmacy First is an NHS service in England that allows people to get advice and treatment for minor health conditions directly from a pharmacist, without needing to see a GP.

What's the purpose of Pharmacy First?

- Faster access to care - Patients can walk in or be referred to pharmacies for minor illnesses (no GP appointment needed).
- Seven common conditions – Pharmacists can treat 7 conditions such as sinusitis, sore throat, earache, UTIs, shingles, impetigo, and insect bites.
- Easy access to medicines - Pharmacists can supply POMs (like antibiotics) during the consultation which saves a trip to the GP!
- Reduces pressure on GPs - Pharmacies help free up GP time for more serious cases.

Who can use Pharmacy First?
✅ Tick all that apply!

- ☐ Adults
- ☐ Children (with a parent/guardian)
- ☐ Anyone registered with a GP in England

Conditions Treated Under Pharmacy First

Pharmacy First covers **seven common conditions**. Match the condition to the symptom(s):

Condition	Common Symptom(s)
Sinusitis	Nasal congestion and facial pain
Sore Throat	Sore throat, trouble swallowing
Acute otitis media (earache)	Ear pain, especially in children
Impetigo	Painful red sores or blisters on skin
Infected insect bites	Swelling and pus around an insect bite
Shingle	Rash and burning pain on one side of the body
Urinary tract infection (UTI)	Pain when urinating, cloudy urine

Observing Consultations (Confidentiality Respected)

Clinical Skills Used:

☑ Tick the ones you see used in Pharmacy First:

- ☐ Blood pressure check
- ☐ Temperature measurement
- ☐ Visual inspection of skin
- ☐ Asking about symptoms and history
- ☐ Checking for allergies

Write one question a pharmacist might ask during a consultation:

e.g. How long have you had these symptoms for?

Why is communication so important in Pharmacy First?

Good communication helps make sure the patient gets the right advice, stays safe, and feels confident about what to do. If the problem is serious, the Pharmacists needs to be able to explain why the person should see a doctor so they understand.