

Clinical Pharmacists in General Practice

About clinical pharmacists

Clinical pharmacists work as part of the general practice team to improve value and outcomes from medicines and consult with and treat patients directly. This includes providing extra help to manage long-term conditions, advice for those on multiple medicines and better access to health checks. The role is pivotal to improving the quality of care and ensuring patient safety.

What can clinical pharmacists help with?

- ✓ Prescribing
- ✓ Medication reviews
- ✓ Medication queries
- ✓ Telephone reviews
- ✓ Treatment of minor illnesses
- ✓ Managing a patient's condition holistically
- ✓ Ensuring patients get the most out of their medication
- ✓ Ensuring there is joined-up care for patients.

How are GP practices benefitting?

Clinical pharmacists can prescribe certain medication, conduct medication reviews; answer questions about medication and support patients over the course of their treatment.

Having clinical pharmacists in GP practices means that GPs can focus their skills where they are most needed, for example on diagnosing and treating patients with more complex conditions. This helps GPs to manage the demands on their time.

How does the role of a clinical pharmacist differ from that of a community pharmacist?

A clinical pharmacist's role within a GP practice differs markedly from a pharmacist who is based in the community.

One of the big changes is that pharmacists based in GP practices are able to prescribe medicine for patients. For example, when a person is diagnosed with a condition, such as diabetes or hypertension, the clinical pharmacist is able to manage their condition holistically to ensure they are getting the right advice. This includes making sure they start or stop treatment at the right time and ensure they are getting the most out of their medication to manage their condition appropriately.

Community pharmacists support patients by advising them about minor illnesses and self-care. They are also responsible for giving people general advice on maintaining good health and preventing long-term disease, as well as ensuring patients are taking their medication correctly and as intended by the prescriber.

Clinical pharmacists work together with a range of other healthcare professionals, including pharmacists in the community or those in the hospital. A clinical pharmacist does not give a patient their medication; this would need to be collected from a community pharmacy in the usual way.

How can patients book to see or access advice from a clinical pharmacist?

Patients can be booked in to see a clinical pharmacist by the surgery in their clinic.

Patients will see a clinical pharmacist in the same way they would usually see their GP or practice nurse, e.g. in a private room.

If a patient sees a clinical pharmacist, they will still be able to see a GP if they need to.

Examples of how clinical pharmacists can help patients:

Long-term conditions

Long-term conditions include things like asthma, type 2 diabetes, arthritis or high blood pressure.

If a patient has a long-term condition, the clinical pharmacist can offer expert advice on their medications. For example, making sure they are on the most appropriate medication and that it is working for the patient and they are getting the most out of their medications.

They may also help by offering advice on how a patient can make lifestyle changes to help manage their condition and to help them stay well.

Dealing with side effects

If a medication is making a patient feel unwell, the clinical pharmacist can help by changing the medication or changing the dosage they are taking.

If the patient is on multiple medications, the clinical pharmacist can help to make sure they are all working well together.

Medication reviews

If a patient is taking medication for a long time, they will need to have a medicine review at least once a year. This is to ensure the medication is still working properly.

The clinical pharmacist can check all the patients' medication and talk to them about how their medication is working for them.

They can also perform health checks such as taking the patients' blood pressure or making appointments for them to have other tests, like blood tests.

If a patient had recently been to hospital, their medication may have changed while they were there. The clinical pharmacist can help to explain any changes to the medication and to make sure they are working well for the patient.