

5 things pharma should consider when supporting pharmacies

#1 Pharmacy training should have customer experience at its heart

The best way to ensure training improves the customer experience in pharmacy is to get customers involved in the development of the training itself. The General Pharmaceutical Council requires that all UK pharmacy schools involve pharmacy service users (patients, the public, carers, and consumers) in the development of training materials to ensure that their views and experiences are captured.¹

We believe that service user involvement should not stop after pharmacy school but continue throughout pharmacists' ongoing training and professional development. Pharma can support this by developing user-driven training materials.

ECG Training Ltd have created a series of blogs on the topic of obesity, supported by Novo Nordisk.^{2,3,4} Written by patients, these blogs intimately capture the individual's perspective and experiences, and form an integral part of ECGs pharmacy weight management training courses.⁵

Pharmacy support staff refers to staff within the pharmacy team who are not registered pharmacists but have important roles in dispensing and advising on the use of medicines and the provision of pharmacy services.⁶

A recent audit of over 9,000 pharmacies found that approximately 11% of consultations were started by pharmacy support staff, before being referred to a pharmacist. These interactions should not be undervalued in your brand plan, as they will also affect customers' experiences.⁷

Top Tips



Use patient blogs to enhance pharmacist's understanding of the therapy area



Don't undervalue pharmacy support staff

#2 Disease materials should empower customers to engage in their own healthcare

Disease awareness and information materials can encourage customers to engage with their own health and wellbeing and ensure they have the information they need. When developing materials, refer to best practice guidance developed by the Patient Information Forum to ensure materials are easy to understand and effectively communicate difficult topics, such as risks and uncertainties.⁸

The Patient Information Forum (PIF) has recently developed the 'PIF Tick'; the only UK quality mark for trustworthy health information that meets 10 key criteria, including being grounded in relevant, up to date evidence from reputable sources and being easy to access and navigate. The criteria itself was developed with the help of PIF's 1,000 strong membership, representing more than 300 cross-sector health organisations.⁹

#3 Strategy should align with the Healthy Living Pharmacy (HLP) Framework

As part of the NHS's Long-term Plan,¹⁰ as of April 2020 all pharmacy contractors are required to be a level 1 HLP. Among other requirements, this means that all community pharmacies must:¹¹

- > have trained health champions in place to deliver interventions on key issues such as smoking cessation and weight management
- > hold health promotion events/campaigns.
- > be aware of health and wellbeing resources available in the community to direct service users to (e.g. support groups, community exercise groups)

The aims of the HLP Framework include reducing health inequalities by delivering consistency in care and improvement in wellbeing through engagement with the local community.¹⁰

Pharma should be aware of the changes pharmacies are making to become HLPs and adopt and embed HLP aims in their own brand plans and activities.



Did you know?

Consumer research has found that 80% of the public would look for a quality mark on health information



The impact of introducing HLPs is expected to be large.

In 2016, Public Health England reported¹² that 20% of people who used an HLP service would not have otherwise received support for improving their health, and 60% would have otherwise made an appointment with their GP – a service which is massively overstretched.

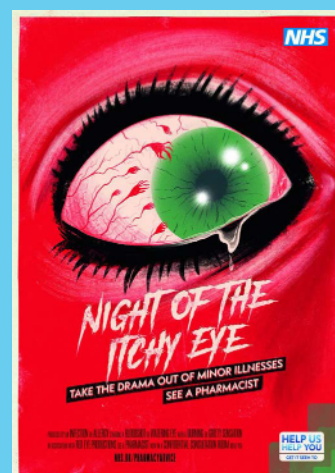
#4 The public are not always aware of the exceptional services and products pharmacies offer that may benefit them

While pharmacies have an incredible number of services and products available to service users, public awareness of them is low. It is important that this gap in awareness is addressed. When developing brand plans, consider the often-unsung services pharmacies provide and support them by raising awareness through activities such as advertisements and materials at the point of sale.

Case Study:

NHS England's 2020 'Help us help you' campaign

In January 2020, NHS England launched a 'movie-inspired' campaign to encourage the public to "take the drama out of minor illnesses" by visiting their community pharmacist rather than the GP or emergency room when experiencing symptoms such as a sore throat, itchy eyes, and ear infections.¹³ In this way, they can get expert advice straight away and help alleviate pressure on other busy services.



#5 Understand the new patient and consumer journey

NHS England's Community Pharmacy Consultation Service (CPCS) connects patients who have a minor illness or need an urgent supply of a medicine with a community pharmacy for a booked appointment. As of September 2020, the CPCS was extended to include referrals from GP reception teams,¹⁴ where previously it only applied to referrals from the NHS 111 service.

The CPCS is helping to alleviating pressure on GP appointments, in addition to harnessing the skills and knowledge of pharmacists to change the patient and consumer journey for good.

Pharma must understand the emerging consumer journey and develop ways to support pharmacies as they take on a new role.

Top Tips

Click on these links to find out more



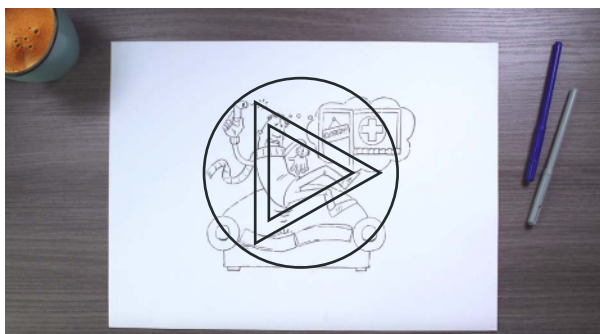
The Patient Engagement Hub for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) provides ideas and inspiration to stimulate and support patient engagement.



The Clinical Ambassadors initiative is a great place to discover more about the wide range of clinical services pharmacies offer.

#5 Understand the new patient and consumer journey (cont)

If you are interested in learning more about the CPCS and what this means for patients, watch the following video produced by NHS England to illustrate the changes in the patient journey since its introduction.



Pharmacy Complete provides lots of training and materials if you are interested in learning more about the Healthy Living Pharmacy Framework.

References:

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2. <https://ecgtraining.co.uk/paul-opens-up-about-living-with-diabetes-and-obesity/>
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