



**International Pharmaceutical Federation
Fédération internationale pharmaceutique**

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FIP STATEMENT OF POLICY POINT OF CARE TESTING IN PHARMACIES

Introduction

A key area in which pharmacists can make a major contribution to healthcare is by helping people to avoid ill health, maintain good health and, where applicable, manage their use of medicines. One aspect in this context is the provision, in the absence of any symptoms of disease, of health screening services. These may also be provided as part of a service monitoring the outcomes of treatment, for example with cholesterol lowering medicines. Studies have demonstrated the potential economic benefits of the provision of these services in pharmacies. The maintenance of good health will significantly reduce the need for expenditure on healthcare. Monitoring of treatment when illness occurs, will ensure maximum therapeutic benefit is achieved as economically as possible. In both cases, there will be a significant contribution towards containment of healthcare costs. Substantial benefits will, therefore, accrue if pharmacy-based testing services are incorporated in publicly and insurance funded healthcare schemes, as well as being available for purchase by individuals.

Modern equipment for point of care testing in pharmacies, including testing of body fluids, is compact in size and provided it is appropriately located, carefully maintained and operated by competent members of staff, a safe and accurate service can be provided in a community pharmacy.

Knowledge of when testing is appropriate, how results should be interpreted and what action should be taken in the light of the results, is essential for all pharmacists offering health screening services. The result of a test, in isolation, is often not a sufficiently accurate indication of risk to health and must be considered alongside other factors, if the best possible advice is to be given. For example, although hyperlipidaemia, detected by an appropriate series of tests, is certainly a risk factor associated with coronary heart disease (CHD), it has to be considered alongside other modifiable CHD risk factors such as smoking, diet, excessive alcohol consumption, lack of exercise, obesity, and hypertension as well as inadequate control of diabetes in diabetic patients.

Thus the purchase and proper maintenance of equipment represents only part of the resources that have to be devoted to providing a testing service. The allocation of time to carry out the tests, for appropriate patient support and for keeping knowledge up-to-date on interpretation of results and the action that should follow, as well as the preparation of accurate documentation, are all important resource factors.

A further vitally important factor in the provision of a service of high quality, is the need to work in close co-operation with other providers of healthcare to the individuals concerned, particularly the patient's

physician and relevant local clinics. There should be agreement on criteria for patient referral for further investigation and on the appropriate referral pathway.

This FIP Statement is intended to support Member Organisations wishing to promote the provision of point of care testing services in pharmacies.

These Member Organisations should, if necessary, promote the revision of legislation to facilitate community pharmacist involvement in tests for health screening and medication management purposes, as essential and valuable components of comprehensive patient care. They should also encourage governments, health authorities, healthcare insurers and others who fund healthcare, to recognise the quality of life and financial benefits that will accrue from incorporating pharmacy-based screening and medication management services in the health care services they fund.

FIP Member Organisations wishing to promote point of care testing in pharmacies should

- facilitate research designed to demonstrate the benefits to healthcare services of appropriate point of care testing in pharmacies.
- encourage their members to offer high quality health screening and medication management services in community pharmacies
- issue detailed practice guidance to their members, in accordance with their code of ethics, on point of care testing in pharmacies covering
 - the need to maintain a level of staff sufficient to provide these services without detriment to the provision of other professional services in the pharmacy.
 - the training of staff to ensure continuing competency in the use of equipment, standard operating procedures to be followed, risk minimisation, interpretation of results and the limitations of various tests.
 - the need for the institution and diligent operation of a quality assurance programme covering equipment and procedures, to ensure the accuracy of results.
 - the need to retain the results of tests, including full patient details, in an appropriate manner in the pharmacy, complying with all relevant data protection legislation and the profession's code of professional standards in relation to confidentiality.^{1 2}
 - the need to provide suitable facilities for every aspect of the conduct of the tests, for the segregation, storage and disposal of clinical waste and for dealing with spillage and accidental needle-stick injuries.
 - the need to ensure that information about the outcome of tests, and appropriate counselling of individuals can be carried out in a location that provides privacy.
 - the need to work in collaboration with physicians and other professionals providing healthcare to those utilising the testing services provided in the pharmacy, not least to seek to agree relevant referral criteria.

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- the need to obtain the informed consent² of an individual before carrying out a point of care test which requires the taking of a sample of body fluid and authorisation from individuals, before transmitting the result of a test to any other party, including an individual's physician or other healthcare provider; and in the absence of such authorisation to advise the individual to seek medical advice if the pharmacist considers that to be necessary.
 - the need to ensure that the professional indemnity insurance held, covers all aspects of the provision of the screening and testing service provided.
 - the need to participate in collaborative practice research with other healthcare providers to confirm the appropriate interpretation and use of results of tests carried out in the pharmacy and update the appropriate practice guidelines accordingly.
 - the need, when undertaking tests linked to treatment of patients with chronic diseases, to inform them when follow-up tests are required.

Pharmacy students should be given basic education and training on the use of equipment, the interpretation of results and the procedures to be followed in carrying out tests for health screening and medication management purposes and these topics should be included in continuing education for pharmacists.

References:

¹ FIP Statement of Professional Standards on Codes of Ethics for Pharmacists (2004, New Orleans)

² FIP Statement of Policy on Confidentiality of Information gained in the Course of Pharmacy Practice (2004, New Orleans)