

Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists



Contents

Introduction and Background	3
What are the main functions of the Core Competency Framework?	4
The Core Competency Framework and other supports	5
How to use the Core Competency Framework	6
How is the Core Competency Framework Structured?	7
The Core Competency Framework – Domains and Competencies	8
Domain 1 / Personal	9
Domain 2 / Professional	11
Domain 3 / Organisation and Management Skills	12
Domain 4 / Pharmacy Care	13
Domain 5 / Public Health	16
Acknowledgments	17

What is a Competency Framework?

Competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that an individual develops through education, training and work experience. A competency framework is a blueprint that combines competencies and behaviours expected of a professional in their role.

What is the Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists?

This Core Competency Framework reflects the practice of pharmacists in the early stages of their career, i.e., 0-3 years registered. It is also used to provide structure and guidance for pharmacists when reflecting on their continuing professional development (CPD) needs throughout their career.

Introduction and Background

Pharmacists are healthcare professionals and medicines experts with a unique and complex body of knowledge and skills. Patients and the public trust that they can rely on high quality care from pharmacists. This Core Competency Framework sets out the competencies expected of pharmacists, underpinning standards for education and supporting Continuing Professional Development.

The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) is a public body established in law to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public by regulating pharmacists and pharmacies in Ireland. Our principal function is to ensure patient safety and public protection. One of the ways we facilitate this is through the development of a Core Competency Framework (CCF) for Pharmacists, the requirement for which is set out in legislation¹.

In 2013, we published the first Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists in Ireland. It is important that the Core Competency Framework is dynamic in nature and subject to regular review to ensure it remains fit-for-purpose and relevant to the pharmacy profession. Therefore, to reflect the evolving role of pharmacists and other changes over the intervening period, and in line with our commitment to continuous quality improvement, we have reviewed and updated the Core Competency Framework.

Version 2 of the Core Competency Framework is contained in this document.

The central purpose of the Core Competency Framework remains unchanged, which is that it reflects the core competencies expected of pharmacists from 0-3 years of their career. It also underpins the Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) delivered by the Schools of Pharmacy in Ireland and supports pharmacists in identifying their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) needs. The Core Competency Framework may also be a basis for the development of a framework for advanced practice in the future.

What is different?

We carried out research and gathered feedback during the review and development of Version 2 of the Core Competency Framework.

Following the review, some of the key changes made include:

- 1. Domains:** The number of domains has been reduced from six to five. Domain titles have been adapted to be applicable to the diverse roles in which pharmacists practise their profession, and a description has been added to explain what the domain covers.
- 2. Competencies:** Some competencies have been removed or merged where appropriate (e.g., where there was duplication) and others have been added to reflect changes in practice. All competencies are in the 'active voice'.
- 3. Behaviours and their application:** The number of behaviours has been reduced. New behaviours have been added to reflect changes in practice. Behaviours are in the 'first person' to assist those using the Core Competency Framework better assess whether a competency and behaviour is relevant to their role.
- 4. Improved clarity and updated language:** The language across the document has been updated and the use of graphics has been increased to help improve clarity on the functions and use of the Core Competency Framework.

¹ Rule 4(1) of the PSI (Education and Training) (Integrated Course) Rules 2014 to 2021.

What are the main functions of the Core Competency Framework?

Underpinning the education and training of pharmacy students

The Core Competency Framework is a fundamental component of the accreditation standards for the Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) programme, as set by the PSI. It is used by Schools of Pharmacy in the development of the curriculum for the MPharm programmes and by students on experiential learning placements.

Helping pharmacists identify their CPD needs

The framework is used by pharmacists when planning CPD. Pharmacists use the Core Competency Framework to self-reflect on their learning and development needs against the domains and competencies in the Core Competency Framework that are applicable to their particular role and/or practice setting.

Acting as a public statement

The competency framework provides a useful benchmark for patients, other healthcare professionals, policy-makers and others of the key skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours associated with and expected of pharmacists.

Other functions

- Informs the Professional Registration Examination (PRE)
- Informs Accreditation Standards for CPD Programmes
- Provides support for Practice Review
- Provides a platform for the development of advanced practice

The Core Competency Framework and other supports

The Core Competency Framework is one of a number of tools in place to underpin and support the practice of pharmacists in Ireland.

Legislation: National and European legislation forms the foundation on which the practice of pharmacists is based. As well as pharmacy and medicines specific legislation, pharmacists must also understand, consider and comply with other legislation relevant to their role and area of practice.

The PSI: As the pharmacy regulator, the PSI is the competent authority of pharmacists in Ireland. The legislation, standards, guidelines and the Code of Conduct developed by the PSI outline specific requirements for pharmacists to maintain their registration. Included in these is the mandatory system for CPD that pharmacists must comply with.

Code of Conduct: The Code of Conduct for Pharmacists is a public declaration of the principles and ethical standards which govern pharmacists in the practice of their profession and which the public, patients, other healthcare professionals and society require and expect from pharmacists.

Core Competency Framework: As described in this document, the Core Competency Framework outlines the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours attained by pharmacists that enable them to practise effectively.

Practice Guidance, Assessment Systems and Operational Standards: Guidelines and standards are used by pharmacists to ensure consistency and quality of services delivered. They allow pharmacists to reflect on, and measure, their professional practice. They also serve as a self-assessment quality improvement tool for members of the profession to meet appropriate standards for the services they provide.



How to use the Core Competency Framework

The way you use the Core Competency Framework will depend on you and your role.



Pharmacists

Pharmacists use the Core Competency Framework for CPD purposes by reflecting on their learning and development needs against the domains and competencies applicable to their role, practice setting and scope of practice. Pharmacists also use the Core Competency Framework to assess students while on their statutory experiential learning placements. Examples of how pharmacists might use the Core Competency Framework is available as an additional resource on the PSI website.



Schools of Pharmacy

Schools of Pharmacy should use the Core Competency Framework to inform the development of the curriculum for the Master of Pharmacy (MPharm). The development of the curriculum should ensure that graduates of the MPharm are able to demonstrate all competencies included in the Core Competency Framework upon registration. The Core Competency Framework also informs the MPharm Accreditation Standards.



Pharmacy Students

The Core Competency Framework provides students with an understanding of the competencies that they will be expected to demonstrate upon registration. It underpins the curriculum of the MPharm. Students are also assessed on the competencies in the Core Competency Framework during their experiential learning placements. An example of how a student might use the Core Competency Framework is available as an additional resource on the PSI website.



The Public

The Core Competency Framework provides a statement to patients and the public on the professional role of a pharmacist.



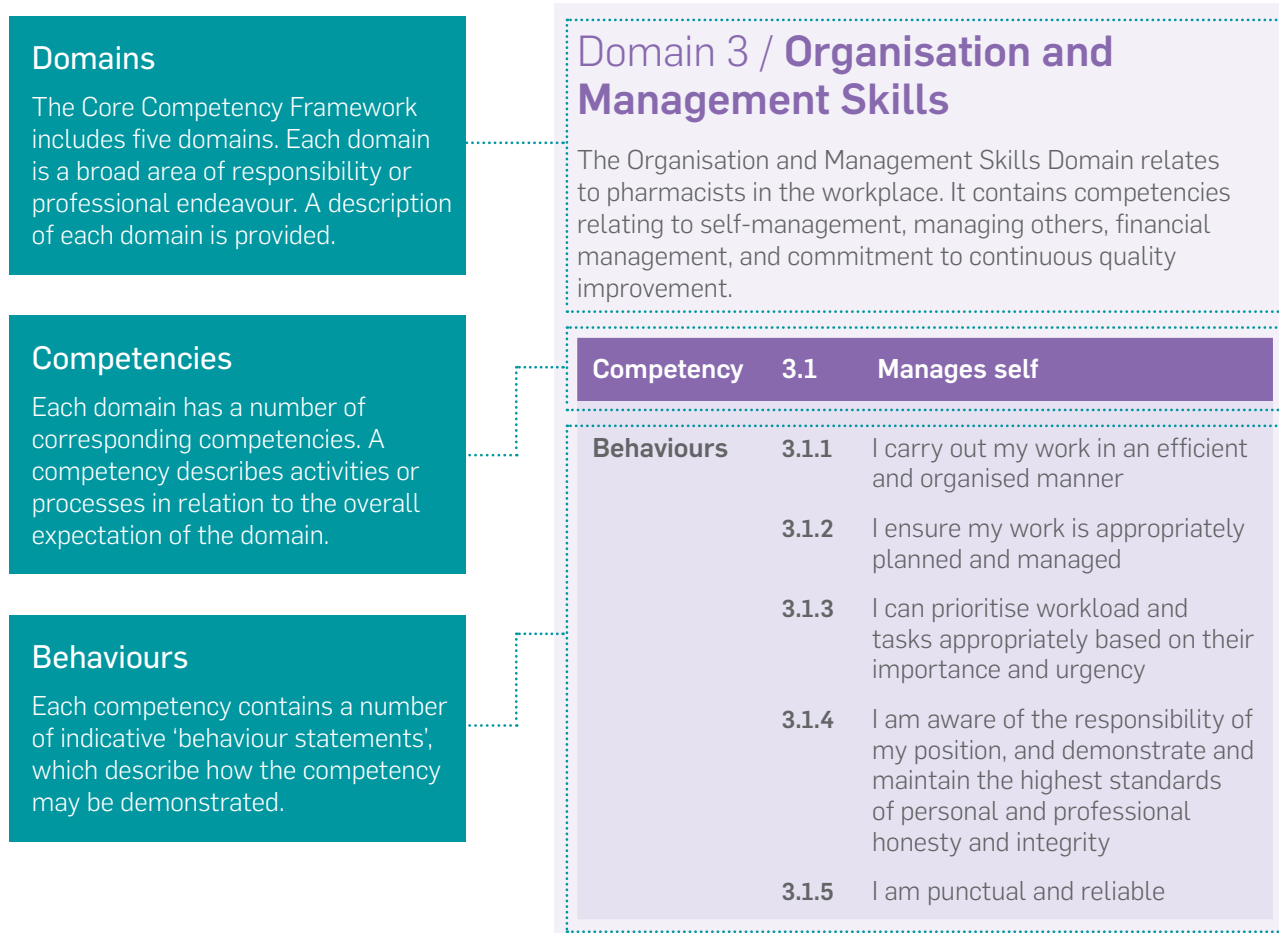
The Irish Institute of Pharmacy (IIOp)

The IIOp, which oversees on behalf of the PSI, the development and management of the CPD system for pharmacists in Ireland, refers to the Core Competency Framework when developing CPD programmes and training. Practice Review² and the PSI's accreditation standards for CPD programmes are also informed by the Core Competency Framework.

² As part of the CPD system, pharmacists in patient facing roles may be selected for Practice Review. This is defined in the CPD Rules as the "direct evaluation ... of the knowledge, skills and judgement of the pharmacist, against a standard established in consultation with peer pharmacists practising in patient-facing roles, having regard to the Core Competency Framework for Pharmacists, with particular reference to those competencies dealing with patient care, including clinical knowledge, the ability to gather and interpret appropriately information from and about patients, patient management and education and communication (including counselling) skills."

How is the Core Competency Framework Structured?

The Core Competency Framework consists of five domains. Each domain is underpinned by a number of competencies and each competency contains behaviours. The structure is illustrated below.



A note on behaviours...

The inclusion of behaviour statements is intended to help those using the Core Competency Framework understand whether a competency is applicable to them, and prompt activity to further develop in a particular area, e.g., by carrying out CPD activity related to a behaviour within a competency.

The behaviour statements provided are examples of how an individual may meet or demonstrate a competency. They are not intended to be an exhaustive list – in fact there are many ways in which someone could meet the competency. This is particularly relevant for pharmacists as they progress through their career and develop expertise in different areas. Pharmacists are therefore encouraged to review the behaviours provided and reflect on whether they are applicable to them in their role. If a pharmacist considers that a **competency** does apply to them, but that some or all of the **behaviours** within the competency are not applicable, then they are encouraged to consider other ways in which they demonstrate or could demonstrate the competency. An example of how this can be done is available as an additional resource on the PSI website.

The Core Competency Framework – Domains and Competencies

Domain	Competency
1. Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Demonstrates leadership 1.2 Confidently makes sound decisions and solves problems 1.3 Establishes and maintains collaborative working relationships 1.4 Communicates effectively
2. Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 Applies a 'person-centred' approach 2.2 Practises legally and ethically 2.3 Commits to lifelong learning and development 2.4 Adapts to change and innovation
3. Organisation and Management Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Manages self 3.2 Manages within the workplace 3.3 Manages finance 3.4 Commits to continuous quality improvement and risk management
4. Pharmacy Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Manufactures and compounds medicines 4.2 Manages the medicines supply chain 4.3 Dispenses, supplies and administers medicines 4.4 Provides patient consultations and counselling 4.5 Reviews and manages medicines 4.6 Leads for safety 4.7 Provides medicines information and education
5. Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 Participates in population health initiatives 5.2 Engages in health promotion activities 5.3 Commits to evidence-based practice

The Core Competency Framework

Domain 1 / Personal

The Personal Domain consists of competencies that are relevant to pharmacists in all areas of practice. It includes competencies relating to leadership, decision making, collaborative working and communication.

Competency	1.1	Demonstrates leadership
Behaviours	1.1.1	I lead by example , actively demonstrating my commitment to safety and quality within my practice environment
	1.1.2	I ensure I am always professional and well-informed in order to build credibility and portray the profession in a positive light
	1.1.3	I apply a rigorous and systematic approach to my work, including during periods of change
	1.1.4	I am open to and encourage two-way feedback with others. I reflect on and modify my behaviour and practice in response to feedback and experience.
	1.1.5	I provide appropriate guidance, support or supervision to internal colleagues and external stakeholders
	1.1.6	I identify tasks and responsibilities that can be safely delegated , checking the scope of delegations is fully understood

Competency	1.2	Confidently makes sound decisions and solves problems
Behaviours	1.2.1	I can make accurate, evidenced based and timely decisions in relation to my work
	1.2.2	I am clear when I need to refer to one or more reliable sources and to other people to support decision making and problem solving, including when to refer decisions to a higher level of authority
	1.2.3	I communicate and document decisions and their rationale using the appropriate level of detail
	1.2.4	When making or contributing to decisions or solving problems, I consider relevant professional, ethical and patient safety factors

Competency	1.3	Establishes and maintains collaborative working relationships
Behaviours	1.3.1	I respect and appreciate the expertise, roles and responsibilities of colleagues and other health professionals
	1.3.2	I work collaboratively with others, including other health professionals in the care of patients
	1.3.3	I am aware of the risk to patients during care transitions , and complete effective handovers with colleagues and other health professionals to ensure continuity of care
	1.3.4	I participate, collaborate and advise on therapeutic decision-making , and use appropriate referral in a multidisciplinary team
	1.3.5	I have a broad understanding of the services delivered by other health professionals

Competency	1.4	Communicates effectively
Behaviours	1.4.1	I use effective verbal, non-verbal, listening, written and virtual communication skills to communicate clearly, inclusively and appropriately
	1.4.2	When communicating with others, I use appropriate language and check understanding , and I adapt my style when communicating with people who have different or additional needs
	1.4.3	I demonstrate respect, sensitivity, empathy, and cultural and social awareness when communicating with others
	1.4.4	I am cognisant of my obligations in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion in my interactions with patients, colleagues and other health professionals
	1.4.5	I have influencing and negotiation skills that I use to resolve conflicts and problems
	1.4.6	I listen to patients and their carers, respect their views about their health and medicines, and empower them to be involved in their care

Domain 2 / Professional

The Professional Domain relates to pharmacists as professionals, and contains competencies relating to having a 'person-centred' approach, practising legally and ethically, commitment to lifelong learning and development, and adaptability to change and innovation.

Competency	2.1	Applies a 'person-centred' approach
Behaviours	2.1.1	I demonstrate a ' person-centred ' approach by ensuring patient safety and quality are core to my practice
	2.1.2	I educate and empower patients to manage their own health and medicines, and assist them to make informed choices
	2.1.3	I act as an advocate for patients , and provide support where advice or treatment is declined, or their choices are at variance with my professional views
	2.1.4	I monitor the medicines and other healthcare needs of patients and make recommendations for improvement as appropriate

Competency	2.2	Practises legally and ethically
Behaviours	2.2.1	I understand and apply the requirements of both Irish and European pharmacy and medicines law , as well as any other legislation relevant to my role
	2.2.2	I behave ethically , and make and justify decisions in accordance with the principles of the PSI Code of Conduct
	2.2.3	I recognise ethical dilemmas when they arise, reason through them in a structured manner, and seek guidance from others when needed
	2.2.4	I raise concerns and take appropriate action to address unprofessional and unethical behaviour including inappropriate prescribing

Competency	2.3	Commits to lifelong learning and development
Behaviours	2.3.1	I critically reflect on my own practice, skills and performance to identify learning and development needs
	2.3.2	I engage in professional development and lifelong learning activities that address identified learning and development needs and apply these to improve my practice
	2.3.3	I document my learning and development activities
	2.3.4	I keep my knowledge and skills up to date as relevant to my role
	2.3.5	I promote and contribute to opportunities for learning and development that enhances the practice of colleagues, pharmacy students and/or other healthcare professionals

Competency	2.4	Adapts to change and innovation
Behaviours	2.4.1	I recognise and respond to opportunities for change within my role
	2.4.2	I adapt to the evolving needs of patients and the health system
	2.4.3	I maintain digital competence relevant to my role and embrace technology and innovation that can improve safety, efficacy and efficiency of patient care

Domain 3 / Organisation and Management Skills

The Organisation and Management Skills Domain relates to pharmacists in the workplace. It contains competencies relating to self-management, managing others, financial management, and commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Competency	3.1	Manages self
Behaviours	3.1.1	I carry out my work in an efficient and organised manner
	3.1.2	I ensure my work is appropriately planned and managed
	3.1.3	I can prioritise workload and tasks appropriately based on their importance and urgency
	3.1.4	I am aware of the responsibility of my position , and demonstrate and maintain the highest standards of personal and professional honesty and integrity
	3.1.5	I am punctual and reliable

Competency	3.2	Manages within the workplace
Behaviours	3.2.1	I understand the principles of management and leadership
	3.2.2	I understand and adhere to the documented procedures and policies within my practice
	3.2.3	I work effectively with leadership and management , including supervising and superintendent pharmacist(s) as relevant
	3.2.4	I address management issues as required in my position of responsibility
	3.2.5	If I identify opportunities to improve the management and allocation of resources , I discuss these with colleagues and management
	3.2.6	I engage with my organisation's systems for performance leadership
	3.2.7	I serve as a role model, coach and mentor to colleagues and students

Competency	3.3	Manages finance
Behaviours	3.3.1	I can effectively analyse and manage financial data and budgetary information as appropriate to my role
	3.3.2	I understand the health service reimbursement schemes through which patients are entitled to receive medication and ensure appropriate and accurate claims are submitted
	3.3.3	I understand the principles of pharmacoeconomic assessment and medicines cost benefits analyses

Competency	3.4	Commits to continuous quality improvement and risk management
Behaviours	3.4.1	I recognise the commitment to continuous quality improvement as a core principle of my role as a pharmacist
	3.4.2	I understand the role of policies and procedures in supporting me in my role and in the safe provision of pharmacy services
	3.4.3	I contribute to the development, implementation, maintenance of and training in standard operating procedures
	3.4.4	I contribute to audit activities and understand the value and importance of using feedback from complaints and audit to improve and develop services
	3.4.5	I understand that risk is a reality in my role and proactively identify, manage, mitigate and review risks in relation to my workplace, patients and the public

Domain 4 / Pharmacy Care

The Pharmacy Care domain covers the competencies specific to the practice of pharmacy, including those relating to medicines manufacture, supply and dispensing, and the delivery of pharmaceutical care.

Competency	4.1	Manufactures and compounds medicines
Behaviours	4.1.1	I keep my pharmaceutical knowledge on formulating and compounding of medicines up to date and understand Good Manufacturing Process (GMP)
	4.1.2	I can confidently and accurately perform pharmaceutical calculations as relevant to my role
	4.1.3	When manufacturing and compounding medicines, I consider the appropriate route of administration, dosage form and ingredients , and prepare according to required standards
	4.1.4	I adhere to appropriate quality systems in place, and maintain appropriate records

Competency	4.2	Manages the medicines supply chain
Behaviours	4.2.1	I understand Good Distribution Practice (GDP) and source medicines of appropriate quality from reliable and authorised suppliers
	4.2.2	I follow documented procedures to manage drug shortages and recalls
	4.2.3	I always strive to source and supply medicines that are authorised for use in Ireland, and where this is not possible, I am aware of the additional risk and requirements relating to exempt medicinal products
	4.2.4	I ensure there is no conflict of interest or inappropriate inducements in the sourcing and supply of medicines
	4.2.5	I provide information and guidance on how to safely dispose of unused, unwanted or expired medicines

Competency	4.3	Dispenses, supplies and administers medicines
Behaviours	4.3.1	I accurately dispense medicines in an organised, safe and systematic way according to documented procedures
	4.3.2	I review prescriptions to ensure legal validity, and pharmaceutical and therapeutic appropriateness
	4.3.3	I review and update the available patient history and records
	4.3.4	I consult with the prescriber or patient when required, and record interventions
	4.3.5	I supply and administer authorised medicines, including vaccinations, as appropriate to my role and level of training
	4.3.6	I recommend appropriate non-prescription medicines and advice for minor ailments taking into account patients' preferences and best evidence and guidance
	4.3.7	I provide honest, accurate and evidenced-based information on complementary and alternative medicines and therapies

Competency	4.4	Provides patient consultations and counselling
Behaviours	4.4.1	I use appropriate questioning techniques to gather relevant information from patients and carers
	4.4.2	I apply a structured approach to consultations and am always mindful of confidentiality and privacy
	4.4.3	I assess symptoms and generate diagnoses based on objective and subjective measures, and if appropriate, use diagnostic aids and tests
	4.4.4	I advise patients when to seek further medical intervention , and provide appropriate signposting
	4.4.5	I administer emergency care and first-aid when required and refer to appropriate follow-up care
	4.4.6	When counselling patients , I provide sufficient information , use language they understand , and check understanding , to ensure the safe and appropriate use of medicines and devices

Competency	4.5	Reviews and manages medicines
Behaviours	4.5.1	I identify and resolve medicines issues , including suspected prescribing errors, interactions and dosage problems
	4.5.2	I follow evidence-based guidelines and protocols to complete medicines reconciliation and medicine reviews
	4.5.3	I monitor medicines use , encouraging patient adherence and addressing suspected misuse or abuse
	4.5.4	I liaise with and provide advice to prescribers, patients and those involved in their care to ensure optimal therapeutic benefits of medicines , and check that any additional monitoring required is in place
	4.5.5	I adhere to local and national medicines management strategies , including those that aim to improve cost-effective use of medicines

Competency	4.6	Leads for safety
Behaviours	4.6.1	I recognise that medication safety is a priority , and contribute to a culture of safety within my workplace
	4.6.2	I report, review and learn from 'near misses' and errors, sharing and implementing improvements and preventive measures
	4.6.3	I communicate clearly and openly with patients, colleagues and other health professionals in relation to errors
	4.6.4	I contribute to a national reporting system of pharmacovigilance , identifying, recording and reporting suspected or confirmed adverse drug reactions, sensitivities or allergies, and quality defects
	4.6.5	I keep myself informed about emerging medication safety information and implement any new safety guidance and protocols required, paying particular attention to higher risk medicines

Competency	4.7	Provides medicines information and education
Behaviours	4.7.1	I ensure the information, advice and education I provide to patients, the public and other healthcare professionals is accurate and high quality
	4.7.2	I access information through appropriate, evidenced based sources
	4.7.3	I always consider my audience when providing information, taking into account any additional needs they have, and check understanding

Domain 5 / Public Health

The Public Health domain relates to the role of pharmacists in public health, and includes competencies relating to public health initiatives, health promotion and commitment to evidence-based practice.

Competency	5.1	Participates in population health initiatives
Behaviours	5.1.1	I support the implementation of national health and medicines policies and guidelines
	5.1.2	I contribute to identification, planning, implementation and continuous improvement of services in response to patient and health service needs
	5.1.3	I am aware of the public health resources available to patients and signpost to relevant services
	5.1.4	I participate in national initiatives and planning in preparation and response to disaster situations, pandemics and public health emergencies

Competency	5.2	Engages in health promotion activities
Behaviours	5.2.1	I provide services and advice related to health promotion, disease prevention and control, healthy lifestyle and wellness
	5.2.2	I identify opportunities to engage in health promotion , and demonstrate support for national and local public health priorities and initiatives

Competency	5.3	Commits to evidence-based practice
Behaviours	5.3.1	I deliver patient care that reflects evidence-based practice
	5.3.2	I critically evaluate the integrity, reliability, and applicability of research and literature
	5.3.3	I have the skills to initiate research and audit activities , and participate in research when requested, understanding and adhering to ethical research principles
	5.3.4	I communicate and apply relevant research findings accurately and impartially
	5.3.5	I encourage and promote research designed to improve practice and outcomes for patients
	5.3.6	I understand the value of high quality data and consider its use where it can lead to improved patient outcomes

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