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Welcome message

Dear Pharmacist,

This month's newsletter is focusing on continuing professional development (CPD) and the introduction of the system for pharmacists in Ireland via the new Irish Institute of Pharmacy.

The information here is aimed at addressing some of the 'frequently asked questions' that have been coming to the PSI directly from pharmacists and through their representative organisations.

As you will be aware, the new Irish Institute of Pharmacy was officially launched by the Taoiseach in February of this year. We are now in the final stages of planning for the Institute becoming fully operational and in the coming months you will receive more details from the PSI, and the Institute itself, about what's going on and how the new systems will work.

In the meantime, any further queries you may have at this stage will be welcome to info@thepsi.ie

Q - What will the new Institute do and who will be involved in running it?

The PSI has awarded the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) a four year contract to establish and operate the new Irish Institute of Pharmacy on its behalf. The main role of the Institute will be to oversee the management and delivery of CPD, including the commissioning and accreditation of formal learning activities. The Institute will ensure that CPD programmes offered to pharmacists meet the needs of the profession, as well as the wider healthcare system, and that these programmes are meaningful for pharmacists and their practice.

It will also play a key role in promoting engagement both within the profession and with other professions, providing opportunities for pharmacists to share ideas, information and learning. The Institute will work with the profession in promoting excellence in the areas of pharmacy practice, patient care, education and research and in this role, it will act as a platform to support future developments and expansions in pharmacy practice.

The work of the Institute will facilitate more formal and public recognition of the professional role and development of pharmacists, as well as building the broader profile and reputation of the profession in Ireland. It will also facilitate formal recognition of specialisation in pharmacy and the awarding of fellowships.

The Institute will be led and managed on a day-to-day basis by an Executive Director who will be recruited once the Institute has become operational. The Director will be advised and supported by a Steering Group, which will be composed of representatives from a cross-section of key stakeholders, including members of the pharmacy profession.

Pharmacists from the different areas of practice (community, hospital and industry) will shortly be invited to submit expressions of interest to be appointed to the Steering Group, which will also have representatives from the PSI Council, HSE, Department of Health and pharmacy representative bodies.

The Institute will also establish an Expert Advisory Panel to assist in informing the Institute on current international developments and best practice, as well as ensuring that the views of patients are also represented.

Q - How will CPD be different to the CE I've done in the past?

Many pharmacists in Ireland will be familiar with and have engaged over the years in

continuing education (CE) programmes, such as those provided by the Irish Centre for Continuing Pharmaceutical Education (ICCPPE), or the universities in the form of post-graduate programmes. Many pharmacists are currently undertaking such programmes, such as a Masters in universities here or abroad, or online or distance learning courses.

These types of structured learning programmes, where the main emphasis is on acquiring knowledge about a particular topic, are an important part of CPD in any profession, but CPD is a broader concept than the acquisition of knowledge.

Firstly, CPD takes account of other types of less formal learning activities and skills developed in the workplace, including through interactions with peers, which all contribute to the systematic and ongoing improvement of practice and competence.

The CPD system being introduced here for pharmacists places specific emphasis on the concepts of **reflective practice**. This is where an individual pharmacist actively reflects not only on their learning needs but also what benefits they and their patients are getting from the learning they are doing, and actively thinking about how they use or apply what they've learnt in their practice setting and the impact that is having.

The model is also **portfolio-based**, where a pharmacist will be recording their reflections and their learning activities in a portfolio. This portfolio will provide a structured recording or logging system where they record their learning goals and plans, their reflections on their needs and the learning activities they are undertaking, as well as planning changes in their practice and evaluating their ongoing development. This means that over time a pharmacist can track their progress and plan future learning in order to build on existing skills as they build up their portfolio. CPD also allows for a much more flexible approach, with **peer-supported learning** as a key element, as well as engagement with other professions. Peer networks will be an important part of the new model so that pharmacists can share learning and experiences and support each other in CPD.

Q - How will I know what CPD I should be doing?

Most pharmacists in Ireland are actually already doing some CPD but this is outside of a structured and supportive system which allows for this to be formally recognized and assessed or benchmarked.

The CPD system will be different to traditional systems in that it will not be based on the accumulation of 'points' or 'hours'. Instead pharmacists will be encouraged to adopt a reflective approach to learning and to identify their own learning and development needs based on the skills and competencies required for their particular professional practice. The new model will include practical tools to help pharmacists reflect on their practice and identify what education and training needs they might have, either to enhance existing skills and knowledge areas or gain new competencies.

A pharmacist's CPD portfolio should show a range of learning activities and it is proposed that over a five-year period should include some formal education, as well as informal workplace and peer-led and peer-moderated activities. These might include 'journal clubs', attending or presenting at conferences and practice research initiatives.

The Institute will be there to help pharmacists get to grips with this model and will support them as they put it into practice, so there will be plenty of guidance and tips for pharmacists in how to integrate CPD into their professional practice.

There will also be free courses provided through the Institute which will be developed to meet some general needs and priorities for the profession and the healthcare system – these might include courses to help develop reflective practice, to support superintendent pharmacists in their role, patient consultation skills training or courses designed to support new roles for pharmacists in chronic disease management.

Q - How will the Institute help me with CPD?

Once the Institute is fully operational, a key priority for the first 12-18 months will be to roll-out the CPD model and ensure that pharmacists have the necessary information and supports.

This will include the establishment of a website and online support system, and a series of nationwide information and awareness-raising sessions for pharmacists.

These communication initiatives will also provide pharmacists with an opportunity to give their ideas and feedback to the Institute on how the systems and supports are developed so these can be as 'user-friendly' as possible, and the Institute can better understand the needs of the profession.

The Institute will specifically help pharmacists by:

- providing an e-portfolio system to where pharmacists can confidentially record their CPD, reflections and learning plans
- providing tools and support material through the Institute website to help pharmacists identify their learning needs, for example, through using the core competency framework
- giving information about the available learning opportunities such as formal education or training courses to meet those needs
- providing access to free programmes related to health service and pharmacy profession key priority areas
- keeping pharmacists up-to-date with general CPD issues and developments
- facilitating the setting up of local and special interest peer networks and helping pharmacists to engage with these peer support networks

Q - Who will be providing CPD courses?

It is envisaged that there will be a number of different providers of education, training and other CPD activities, which may include academic institutions such as the schools of pharmacy, pharmacist representative bodies, employers or other providers. It is also envisaged that there will be a wide variety of delivery models, ranging from online or distance courses to face-to-face workshops or lectures, or a mixture of delivery models. It is also envisaged that there will be collaborative partnerships with other professions and their respective equivalent college or institute on multiprofessional and interdisciplinary CPD or education initiatives, as appropriate.

The Institute will have a role in commissioning formal learning activities, particularly those required to meet healthcare needs as new services or roles for pharmacists are rolled out. The PSI is developing accreditation standards against which education and training programmes will be accredited. The Institute will have responsibility for accrediting programmes that it commissions. It will also have a role in recognising formal programmes offered by other academic institutions to ensure they are appropriate for the CPD model.

Q - When and how will CPD be assessed?

CPD is mandatory for pharmacists under the Pharmacy Act 2007, and the introduction of the new model and the establishment of the Institute is part of the overall regulatory framework provided for in the Act, to both quality assure the practice and competence of registered pharmacists for patients and the public and to provide a platform for the improvement and development of the profession.

When fully implemented, the CPD and quality assurance system will include the use of practice reviews with peer involvement, as well as online technologies to assess competence against a standard set in partnership with the profession.

In practical terms this will mean that from 2014 onwards, a percentage of the Register (envisaged to be 20%) will annually submit to a validation process by the Institute of their engagement with CPD, which will include a review of their portfolio and how the individual pharmacists are developing and maintaining their competencies. This validation process will go hand-in-hand with a support and remediation service for pharmacists who require assistance.

In addition to the annual portfolio review, a (smaller) percentage of the Register will be required to undergo a Practice Review, which will be a peer-developed and peer-assessed process comprising of a clinical knowledge assessment and a simulated standardized patient interview.

Q - I work in industry/regulation, not directly with patients – how will my practice and CPD be assessed?

The PSI is cognizant of the need for a mechanism to accommodate practice reviews for registered pharmacists who are not involved in any patient-facing practice, for example those who work in the pharmaceutical industry or in a regulatory or administrative role. Policy in relation to this is currently under development but may include a mechanism where such pharmacists make declarations with regard to their practice and undertake specific programmes and assessment if engaging in or returning to any patient-facing practice. Pharmacists in these roles will however have

to demonstrate that they are undertaking appropriate CPD relevant to the skills and competencies required for their particular professional practice and this will be reflected in their portfolio.

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