

Association of Pharmacy Technicians (UK) position on final checking by non-registered dispensing assistants

The Association of Pharmacy Technicians (UK) (APTUK) acknowledges that the final accuracy check on dispensed items is a process which can theoretically be undertaken by any suitably trained and experienced person. However the final accuracy check is the last step in the process prior to the medicine being given to the patient. APTUK raises the question of responsibility and accountability and advocates that the final accuracy check of dispensed medicines should only be undertaken by suitably qualified and experienced registrants of the Pharmacy regulator.

Referring to the General Pharmaceutical Council's (GPhC) standards for Education (GPhC, 2010) and the National Occupational Standards (NOS) for pharmacy support staff, Pharm 27-"undertake an in-process check of assembled prescribed items prior to the final check" refers to an in-process check, or self-checking which APTUK believes should be embedded into the practice of all pharmacy practitioners.

NOS Pharm 28 "undertake the final check of dispensed medicines and products" is a level 4 unit on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (Ofqual, 2008) and sets out the skills and knowledge required to undertake the task of final accuracy checking. The national framework for accuracy checking pharmacy technicians should be undertaken and achieved by Pharmacy Technicians who have already met the standards for registration to ensure high standards of accuracy and competence and awareness of standard operating procedures and legislation.

The standards for the final accuracy check are now well established. Using staff who do not meet these standards presents a risk for which the Responsible Pharmacist will be accountable. Ultimately it presents a risk to patient safety which APTUK believes is unacceptable.

APTUK also advocates that the title Accuracy Checking Technician (ACT)* be changed to Accuracy Checking Pharmacy Technician (ACPT)* to reflect the professional standing of the individual as a regulated pharmacy professional.

*A number of organisations use the term "accredited" checking (pharmacy) technician. APTUK believes that this could lead to confusion as it is unclear whether it is the pharmacy technician or the qualification that is accredited. It does not specify which organisation has provided accreditation and against which standards.

References:

<http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/Standards%20for%20the%20initial%20education%20and%20training%20of%20pharmacy%20technicians.pdf>
http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/files/qca_05_2242_level_descriptors.pdf