



Why this is important for you?

Pharmacists working in the community have long been recognised as being particularly well placed to provide diagnostic testing and screening services to the public. The types of services offered by pharmacists throughout Great Britain are likely to increase, evidenced by the roll out of NHS Health Checks in England.

Who needs to read this?

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society guidance is aimed at pharmacists and their staff involved in any form of diagnostic testing or screening service, including the testing of body fluids.

What this guidance will tell you?

This guidance outlines ten 'Principles of Good Practice' which should be taken into consideration when setting up and providing any NHS or private diagnostic testing and screening service. It also takes into account the requirements of the Code of Ethics and cross-references to existing Society guidance on specific testing and screening services as well as the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency guidelines on point-of-care testing.

10 principles of good practice

1. Staff should be competent in the roles they are performing.
2. There needs to be an adequate environment in which to provide diagnostic and screening services.
3. A quality assurance program should be in place so that the reliability of results can be assured.
4. These services should be integrated with other local healthcare services as referral pathways will be important.
5. Having the right indemnity insurance is essential.
6. Informed consent from patients is needed before undertaking any test.
7. Appropriate health and safety measures need to be in place to protect you and your staff.
8. Test results should be given directly to the patient and no-one else, unless you have the patient's written authorisation.
9. Any advertising of these services should comply with the professional standards for advertising.
10. You should carry out a risk assessment before starting to offer this service.

Where to go for more information

Email: support@rpsgb.org
Telephone: 020 7572 2302
See full Practice Guidance:
www.rpharms.com

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What is diagnostic testing and screening?

Pharmacists play an important role in illness prevention, managing long term conditions and health promotion. Diagnostic testing / screening services are a key component of supporting self-care and the public expects provision of such services to be safe and accurate with high standards of knowledge and governance. Service provision may vary but typically ranges from sale or supply of a test kit or device (e.g. pregnancy test kits, blood glucose test strips) to direct provision of a monitoring or screening service (e.g. blood pressure monitoring, smoking cessation and carbon monoxide monitoring, chlamydia screening).

What role can pharmacists play?

Diagnostic testing and screening services can be provided as private services or as NHS services. Pharmacists may need to meet specific service specifications by commissioners if they wish to provide NHS diagnostic and screening services.

Why is good practice important in this area?

Good practice and quality assurance are essential so that the reliability of test results can be assured. To help achieve this, staff competence is also important and all relevant pharmacy staff should have a basic understanding of the main areas of diagnostic testing / screening, irrespective of any specific services they are providing in the pharmacy.

What sort of facilities do I need to provide these services?

The pharmacy should have a designated area with suitable facilities determined by the testing / screening service being offered. Risk assessments should be carried out to assess the suitability of the area. The pharmacy should also have facilities to store and dispose of clinical waste products and a designated consultation area (this may be the same as the testing area) in which to provide counselling to the patient.

When should I refer the patient?

It is likely that diagnostic testing / screening services will identify patients who may require further treatment from other healthcare professionals so it is important that before providing a service, pharmacists contact their local health bodies / primary care organisations to obtain advice on appropriate patient referral criteria and pathways.