

Find out about being a
Pharmacy Technician

Find out about the role and what skills and qualifications
you will need



Provided by

What is a Pharmacy Technician?

Pharmacy Technicians are registered professionals with the GPhC who work closely and under the supervision of a registered pharmacist.

Pharmacy technicians can work in a vast range of healthcare settings. They manage the supply of medicines for patients giving medicines to patients either on prescription or over the counter, offering advice on their medication and lifestyle advice. Pharmacy technicians help support patients to get the best from their medication and can help review medication with the patient as well as their compliance and device technique. Pharmacy technicians carry out routine and specialist services using their professional judgment.

What skills do you need?

- Good communication skills
- Ability to work with others (healthcare professionals and members of the public)
- To be accurate and pay close attention to detail
- To be responsible and methodical
- Organised and able to prioritise workload
- Maintain confidentiality and privacy
- An interest in helping people and improving people's health

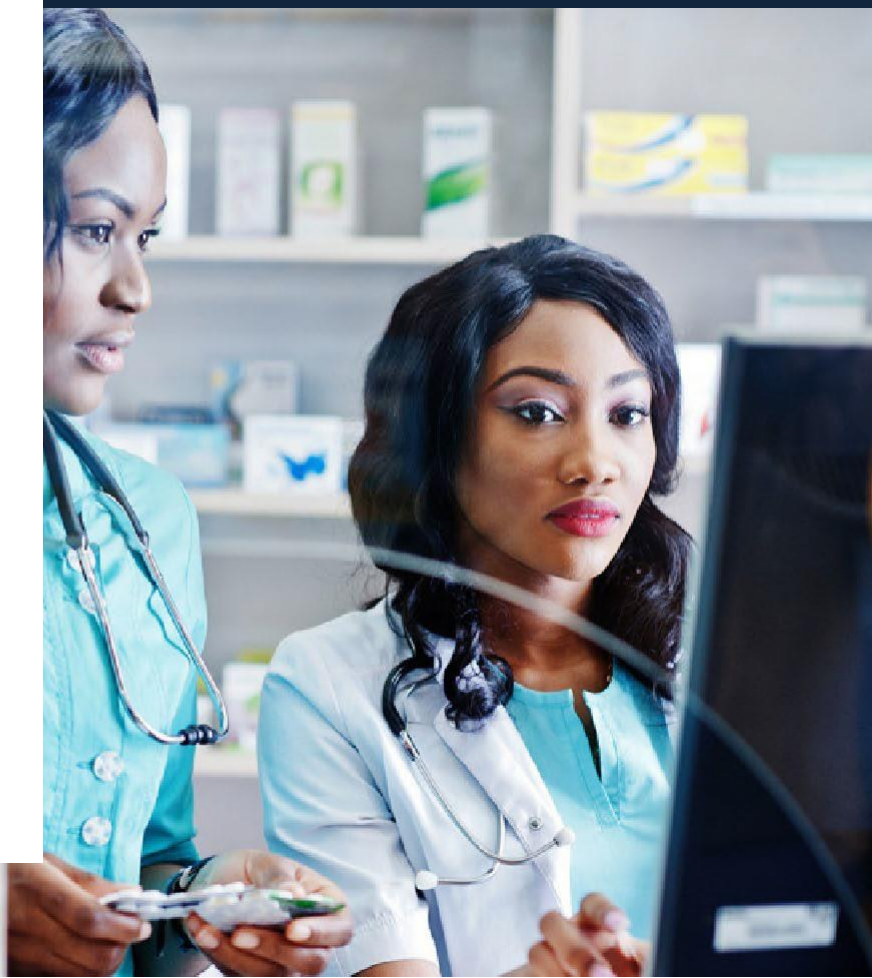
Entry requirements

Maths, English and Science GCSE Grade A*-C/9-4 or equivalent.

The course:

Level 3 college course
2 year course

Find out more



Pharmacy Technicians in Community Pharmacy

Pharmacy technicians in community pharmacy are in a patient facing role, they work in the "heart of the crisis" as they are based in towns, villages and cities in both independent and multi branch settings.

Pharmacy technician duties include:

- Dispensing and accuracy checking of prescriptions
- Provide information to patients about their medication and how to get the most out of their medication
- Provide lifestyle advice
- Manage dispensaries and supervise staff
- Sell medication OTC (Over the counter)
- Administer vaccinations
- Promote health and wellbeing
- Provide expertise on different treatment options
- Monthly audits
- Providing clinical services (e.g. minor ailment scheme, antibiotic guardian, smoking cessation, Blood pressure checks, DMS – Discharge Medicines Service)
- Resolving queries
- Stock and ordering and dealing with MCS (Manufacture can't supply) issues.

Every day about **1.6 million people** visit a pharmacy in England.

89% of the population in England has access to a community pharmacy within a 20-minute walk.

As of the end of March 2019, there were more than **11,500 community pharmacies in England.**

Pharmacy Technicians in Hospitals

Pharmacy technicians have many roles within secondary care (hospitals) and many pharmacy technicians eventually end up specialising in a specific area of secondary care. Aside from specialist pharmacy technician roles there are also rotational roles which enable pharmacy technicians to experience various areas of pharmacy. Managerial roles and educational roles are other career opportunities available for qualified pharmacy technicians to develop into.

In secondary care pharmacy technician roles span across the following areas of pharmacy practice such as:

- Procurement – purchasing and managing medication stock, managing supply issues
- Dispensary – assembling and final checking medication, counselling, selling OTC
- Aseptic labs – assembling and manufacturing products
- Quality assurance
- Medicines management – ward services, medicines reconciliation and optimisation, counselling, coordinating discharge medication
- Clinical trials
- Medicines information and medicines safety
- Homecare
- Management roles – management of staff and departments
- Mental Health hospital and services
- Education and training
- Outpatients and clinic work
- Drug Administration
- Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (EPMA)
- IT roles



Pharmacy Technicians in Primary Care

Pharmacy technicians in primary care play a vital role in providing good patient care on a daily basis. The role of a pharmacy technician in primary care is a patient facing and patient supporting role. Their role can vary depending on the PCNs or practices needs, pharmacy technicians that want to work in primary care must be adaptable and willing to learn as this new role is continuously evolving.

Pharmacy technicians in primary care ensure the safe management of medicines and implement national priorities locally to prevent people from becoming unwell and help them to live healthier lifestyles.

Common job duties may include:

- Medicines reconciliation and optimisation
- Counselling patients on their medications and lifestyle modifications
- Administering vaccines
- Phlebotomy (in some areas)
- Clinical assessment skills
- Effective medicines use through shared decision making with patients
- Review medication as per clinical letters
- Monitoring and management of high risk drugs
- Audits
- Managing shared care agreements and protocols
- Support initiatives for antimicrobial stewardship
- Work alongside other healthcare professionals
- Training of students and other staff members
- Reviewing and managing prescriptions including care home residents
- Helping to support the management of long term conditions
- Handling medication reviews and queries



Pharmacy Technicians in Care Homes

Pharmacy technicians in care homes have three main roles: clinical role involving medicines reconciliation, medicines review, patient counselling and follow ups, technical tasks such as medicines waste management, supporting supply and ordering and training duties involving training the care home staff, community pharmacy, general medical practice teams.

Some duties include:

- Promoting good practice of medicines management processes within care homes including medicines administration, storage, record keeping and disposal of medicinal waste and providing support with implementation, as appropriate
- Working as part of a multidisciplinary team (MDT), proactively developing relationships with Primary Care Networks (PCNs), Trust providers and working closely with care home staff and community pharmacies to ensure provision of medicines.
- Supporting the care home by leading on and / or providing medicines management support and advice to care homes at high risk of safeguarding concerns
- Supporting care home pharmacists with policy development and implementation of the ICB Medicines Optimisation Strategy
- Developing guidelines for use in Care Homes specific to medicines management processes
- Support the care home pharmacists with the planning, conducting and promotion of a wide range of training and educational support for a multidisciplinary audience
- Assist with the medicines management training of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians
- Review patients' medication
- Order and manage stock and prescriptions
- Counsel patients on their medication and provide advice on medication to other healthcare staff
- Medicines reconciliation
- Conduct audits

Pharmacy Technicians in Mental Health

The role of a mental health pharmacy technician is varied, pharmacy technicians who work in the mental health sector may work in patient facing roles and non-patient facing roles, they may work in mental health hospitals, community services or secure rehabilitation units. Some of their roles are similar to pharmacy technicians working in primary and secondary care however the skills and knowledge required to support these patients requires a different focus. The centre for Mental Health Pharmacy (CMHP) offer training modules for pharmacy technicians wishing to develop their Mental Health Pharmacy skills.

Examples of pharmacy technician duties in Mental Health services include:

- Dispensing and accuracy checking of prescribed medication
- Medicines reconciliation and optimisation
- Medication counselling and lifestyle advice
- Monitoring and supplying anti-psychotic medication
- Administration of medicines and vaccines
- Providing training to students and other staff members
- Working with recovery teams and community services
- Understanding the Mental Capacity Act to aid decision making for medication supply and administration
- Working in secure units and hospitals, within rehabilitation centres and ongoing community mental health services
- Provide support to community mental health services for ordering, administering and safe storage of medicines
- Clinical assessment skills such as ECG and blood pressure
- Phlebotomy (in some areas)

There are approximately **1,250 Primary Care Networks (PCNs)** across England.

Medicines waste is a significant issue- as much as **£300 million** in primary care alone, about half of which is avoidable. Pharmacy technicians play a vital role in helping reduce these.

Up to 50% of medicines nationally are not taken as prescribed. **Between 5 to 8%** of all unplanned hospital admissions are due to issues related to medicines (this figure rises to 17% in the over 65s).

Pharmacy Technicians in the Armed Forces

The role of an MoD (ministry of defence) pharmacy technician is different as they work under a DDA model. Civilians may work for the MoD or armed forces staff may be given the opportunity to complete their pharmacy technician course.

Some of their duties include:

- Taking control of all pharmaceutical matters and providing specialist advice to patients, MOs (Medical Officers), nurses and dispensing staff on the correct preparation and administration of drugs.
- Supply and preparation of medication.
- Being aware and fully conversant with all aspects of Pharmacy law, the Misuse of Drugs Act and the dangerous Drugs Act.
- Preparing, updating and maintaining protocols and local working practices relating to the dispensary and medical stores.
- Supervision and on-the-job training of all staff and medics employed within the dispensary.
- Ensuring that prescription charges are made in accordance with current regulations.
- Ensuring that the dispensary is kept fully stocked at all times and that the medicines prescribed by the MOs are dispensed correctly and in accordance with current regulations.
- Ensuring that patients are protected through systems such as Patient Safety Notices, Alerts and other communications concerning patient safety. When new notices or alerts are received ensure that relevant records are updated and medical personnel are informed.
- Perform regular audits.



Pharmacy Technicians in Health & Justice (Prison)

The role of a Pharmacy Technician within the prison setting is a different and varied one. The healthcare and pharmacy service with the prison setting aims to mimic the same service a patient would expect to receive in the wider community however, due to the unique setting and population, there are some stark differences. Every day is different and expect to experience new challenges and situations all the time.

Some of the main duties of a prison pharmacy technician include:

- Managing the administration and issue of medications to prisoners. This includes 'see to take medications' – (observed consumption of routine medicines and those used in dependency) and medications allowed in possession
- In possession risk assessments and spot checks.
- To assist in the issuing, management, and maintenance of repeat prescribing systems
- Liaise with prescribers on formulary options to ensure cost effective, evidence-based prescribing and challenge any prescriptions that fall outside of the formulary
- Counsel patients on any new medications and offer advice when needed
- Provide advice to prisoners on compliance and concordance, and minor ailments and what treatments are available
- Carry out compliance checks to ensure medications are not being abused and security is maintained
- Ensure the safe and secure storage of all medications including controlled drugs and carry out regular stock checks.
- Medicines reconciliation for new inmates
- Prepare medications and/or prescriptions for transfer or release of inmates
- To run technician led clinics – run optional clinics for blood pressure, cholesterol checks, phlebotomy and ECGs
- Resolve medication related queries and provide advice as required.

Pharmacy Technicians in Homecare

There are Pharmacy Technicians working in the homecare sector, their roles vary widely depending on the exact nature of the homecare company and the department they work in.

Here are some examples of work they might be undertaking:

- Procurement
- Dispense and final release highly specialised medications.
- Appropriately package fragile and temperature sensitive medicines for delivery to patient's homes.
- Aseptically prepare tailored individual medications for patients.
- Calculate doses, formulate production details and calculate stability for aseptically prepared products for individual patients.
- Liaise with secondary and tertiary care settings to provide specialist medications.
- Liaise with Patients and Carers to provide technical support about their medication.
- Obtain and ensure appropriate funding for specialist medications
- Negotiate and agree manufacturing and delivery slots for prescribed medications.



Pharmacy Technicians in Education and Training

When Pharmacy Technicians have become experienced practitioners, many are able to move into Education and Training roles, this might be within their current workplace, for other training providers or becoming Education and Training leads. Education and training pharmacy technicians may go on to work for specialist Education and training providers such as colleges and post graduate training centres. Others work for commissioning services, allocating government training funding and supporting workplaces and trainees.

Some responsibilities for Education & Training technician:

- Creating Training plans
- Supervising and tutoring trainees
- Developing training programmes
- Supporting the delivery of training in their workplace
- Providing on the job training and assessment
- Ensuring training and learning outcomes meet the General Pharmaceutical Council's (GPhC) standards
- Sourcing and applying for training funds or places
- Linking with other organisations to provide cross sector training programmes
- Attend, organise, take minutes or chair regular Local Faculty group meetings that monitor and help to improve training provided.
- Facilitate and organise educational sessions for the workforce
- Ensure the workforce has the correct skills and knowledge to carry out the tasks required.
- Identify areas for improvement in the workforce
- Support continuous professional development for employees.

Pharmacy Technicians in Integrated Care Board (ICB)

There are currently 42 ICB's in the UK they were formed on the 1st July 2022 under the Health and Care Act 2022. The ICB are NHS bodies and previous to 1st July 2022 Pharmacy technicians work for the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) however have now all transferred to the ICB after the CCG's were abolished.

Some of the pharmacy technician duties include:

- Writing and reviewing policies relating to the prescribing and patient access to medicines and medical devices
- Commenting on and contributing to formulary development and maintenance
- Visiting and liaising with GP practices assisting them with answering queries from patients, hospitals and other external providers; these queries can be varied and can be clinical, logistical or related to ICB policy
- Assist in implementing local and national initiatives across Primary Care ensuring patients are treated equitably across the area
- Liaising with GP surgeries and community pharmacies to improve communication, understanding and justification of medication choices
- Conduct prescribing audits to better understand trends, conducting investigations and suggesting alternatives where appropriate

Pharmacy Technicians in Commission Support Units (CSU)

The role of the CSU technician is varied and growing, they tend to cover four main areas such as: Medicines optimisation, care homes, project and services as well as data and ICB (Integrated Care Board) system support.

Some of their detailed duties include:

- Managing high-cost drugs and producing monthly reports for the ICB
- Prescribing reports for multiple regions
- Other various reports for the ICB data team
- Pharmacy activity databases and Pharmacy activity reporting
- Respiratory Strategic Clinical Network – Developed a Respiratory Dashboard for some regional ICBs. Attend the Respiratory Board meeting and take the lead on the data for this.
- Website updates
- Maintain and update RAG positions
- Maintain and update guidelines
- Rebates
- Non-medical Prescribing quarterly reports

Pharmacy Organisations

There are many pharmacy organisations in the UK, pharmacy technicians are also part of those teams. The roles will vary depending on the organisation the pharmacy technician is working for. Some of the big UK Pharmacy organisations included:

- GPhC – General Pharmaceutical Council
- APTUK – Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK
- PCPA – Primary Care Pharmacy Association



Birmingham
& Solihull
Training Hub

References:

NHS England » Pharmacy's role enhancing health in Care Homes
Mental Health Pharmacy Technician - Pharmacy Careers
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