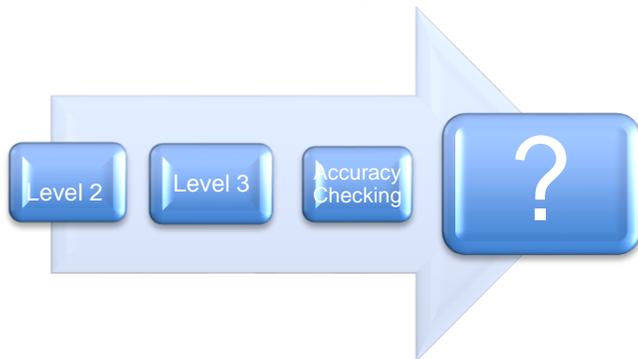


# Inspiring the Future of Professional Development

The role of the pharmacy technician is evolving rapidly and as registered professionals we are heading to the forefront of clinical pharmacy practice. Now practicing as specialists in our own right, the question is, how do qualified pharmacy technicians continue with their professional development in higher education?



In September 2016, the number of GPhC registered pharmacy technicians was 23,205. (*GPhC information request, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016*). Pharmacy technicians registered with the GPhC, practice in varying sectors, including primary and secondary care, community pharmacy, specialist pharmacy services and education.

The GPhC is currently reviewing the education standards of pharmacy technicians to ensure that pharmacy education and training is developed in line with the rapid progression of pharmacy practice (*Centre for Pharmacy Workforce Studies, The quality of pharmacy technician education and training A report to the General Pharmaceutical Council (2014)*<sup>1</sup>). The Centre for Pharmacy Workforce Issues at the University of Manchester were commissioned to undertake a quality review of pharmacy technician education and training. Following on from this review, pharmacy technicians eagerly await the outcome of the consultation, due in 2017.

To enable the role of the pharmacy technician to evolve in its own right, it is essential the training undertaken is appropriate to service requirements. Clinical pharmacy practice is also progressing rapidly for both the pharmacist and the pharmacy technician. In recent years, the up growth of medicines management/optimization and pharmacy clinical services across all sectors, has seen pharmacy technicians taking on more responsibility in a clinical capacity.

The CPPE (*Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education, online*<sup>2</sup>) currently offers excellent further education for qualified pharmacy technicians and I would encourage the use of such tools in maintaining continued professional development. Current expressions of interest for higher apprenticeships in clinical pharmacy skills, are on the horizon. This could potentially be an exciting development in the higher education of pharmacy technicians.

Whilst we eagerly await the outcome of the GPhC standards review for the training and education of pharmacy technicians, it is important to network across the profession to identify educational opportunities currently available.

Recently appointed as the Pharmacy Professional Development lead at Bradford College, I was excited to be at the forefront of supporting pharmacy technicians to expand their clinical skills. The BTEC Level 4 Professional Diploma in Pharmacy Clinical Services is a unique qualification, available to GPhC registered pharmacy technicians across the UK and Ireland. This professional development opportunity revolutionises the future of pharmacy technician CPD and provides key skills required as we move forward into more clinical roles. As an education provider, Bradford College Vocational Science Team plan to work alongside the CPPE and GPhC to understand how to develop our own role in the future of pharmacy technician education.

The BTEC Level 4 Professional Diploma in Clinical Services has been approved for delivery at Bradford College since June 2012. It is the only BTEC programme in the UK, offering an academically recognised award in pharmacy clinical services for the Pharmacy Technician.

The provision of e-portfolios and the delivery of blending learning teaching methods, provides a flexible, convenient and accessible way for pharmacy technicians to undertake their qualification. It allows learners to take an active role in their own development and remain in their workplace whilst studying. Students are not required to attend Bradford College and will be supported by their Bradford College course tutor and their workplace mentor, nominated on enrolment.

Flexible payments options are available for self-funding students and Trusts supporting their pharmacy technicians to undertake the Diploma. At Bradford College the option to undertake the therapeutic unit only is also available. The Professional Diploma is delivered over 2 years for the full qualification and 12-18 months for the single entry therapeutic unit.

My professional development journey began in community pharmacy 13 years ago, undertaking a role as an ACT and in pharmacy retail management. I then progressed onto Bolton Primary Care, CCG. From here I continued to another unique service provider, offering Primary Care services to care home residents across Salford. During my time at the Care Homes Medical Practice, I was able to gain extensive experience across both primary and secondary care and support with the education of clinicians and care home teams.

A key element within this role was the provision of education and supporting the pharmacist in clinical pharmacy practice. Due to the specification of the role, I enrolled on the BTEC Level 4 Professional Diploma in Pharmacy Clinical Services to develop my clinical pharmacy skills further. The College provided me with incredible support throughout the course, including access to online resources, reading materials and tutor support. This is essential in ensuring the student has an accessible distant learning programme. Having undertaken the Diploma, I can confidently demonstrate the positive outcome on professional clinical practice the Diploma delivers. The programme provides flexible, higher education and is adapted to suit pharmacy technicians from all sectors of pharmacy practice. Bradford College aims to support all students, across the UK to ensure the enrolment, participation and certification processes remain as accessible as possible.

I completed the Diploma in the summer of 2016 and within 3 months I was the pharmacy professional development lead for the programme. Once I had finished the Diploma, I was so excited at the potential opportunities out there for pharmacy technicians, the role of pharmacy professional development lead became available. This has been an exciting and interesting transition from primary care to education and I am enjoying all aspects of my new role.

The BTEC Level 4 Professional Diploma has opened the door to an incredible opportunity for me and I envisage it has the potential to support other pharmacy technicians in their individual career progression. Whilst leading and supporting my peers as the course tutor for the Diploma, it has identified some of the key roles pharmacy technicians are now undertaking. Some of which are ultimately essential for delivering pharmacy services and

improving patient outcomes. The possibilities for the future of the pharmacy technician is endless and as we move forward into more clinical roles, this unique professional development qualification cements the gap in the educational market for the continued professional development of qualified pharmacy technicians.

My primary aim is supporting pharmacy technicians with their CPD to improve patient outcomes through the delivery of exceptional teaching, inspirational leadership and pharmaceutical education appropriate to service requirements. I am honored to be a part of this exciting evolution of pharmacy technician development and look forward to working with future BTEC Level 4 Professional Diploma pharmacy technicians; supporting them in their professional development.

## References

1. Centre for Pharmacy Workforce Studies. (2014). *The quality of pharmacy technician education and training A report to the General Pharmaceutical Council*. Available: [https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/quality\\_of\\_pharmacy\\_technician\\_education\\_and\\_training.pdf](https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/quality_of_pharmacy_technician_education_and_training.pdf). Last accessed 12th December 2016.
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