**Mental Health Pharmacists and Pharmacy technicians – overview.**

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians play a vital role in supporting the physical and mental health of patients and service users. Training enables pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in all settings to feel confident and equipped to have the right conversation with a patient and support identification, optimisation and review of medication. Additionally, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are trained to know where to signpost service users to other services or support as needed.

**Working life**

As a mental health pharmacist, you will provide individualised patient care relating to their use of medicines in order to get the best outcomes from them. This will include identifying an appropriate medication choice considering the patients presentation and preference, reviewing efficacy and tolerability of medication regularly with the patient and providing advice about how to get the best from the medicines ranging from storage, administration, discussing benefits of medicines or alternative options and alleviating adverse effects. Mental Health pharmacy technicians work alongside mental health pharmacists to enable the safe and appropriate provision of medicines and medicines advice. Pharmacy technicians provide medicines reconciliation support and are skilled to collate medicines histories and assess adherence options with service users.

**Where will I work?**

Pharmacists as medicines experts work as integral members of the multidisciplinary teams in specialist mental health organisations or as more autonomous practitioners in providing medicines advice and education in community and primary care settings. Pharmacy technicians may be dispensary, ward, and office based to provide medicines support and advise service users and health care teams how to manage medicines. Pharmacy technicians often work alongside pharmacists to support the safe and efficient supply of medicines within primary, acute ,community, secondary and health and justice settings to name a few.

**Who will I work with?**

Within multidisciplinary teams, pharmacists will work alongside medical, nursing, occupational therapist and other allied health care professionals to support the holistic care of patients. Pharmacists will also provide medicines advice independently as part of clinic or one to one session linking into members of the patients care team across care sectors as relevant. Pharmacy technicians will work alongside the pharmacist to support patients’ use of medicines during admission and following discharge, transfer of care to ensure continuity of medicines supply across care settings.

**Entry requirements**

All mental health pharmacists and pharmacy technicians require the relevant pharmacy qualification. For Pharmacists this is a Four-year Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree approved by the General Pharmaceutical Council, plus a one year pre-registration training course in Pharmacy (undergoing revision from 2021). Pharmacy technician training involves completing both a knowledge qualification/course **and** a competence qualification **or** the combined competence and knowledge-based qualification/course. This can be achieved by undertaking General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)-accredited courses, GPhC-recognised qualifications or a GPhC approved apprenticeship pathways.

**Skills and personal characteristics needed**

Pharmacists and technicians working in mental health care require expertise in the appropriate use of medicines to manage mental health problems. An interest in mental health care is essential to work within mental health specialist settings whilst experience is desirable. However, opportunities to gain mental health experience exist not only in secondary care mental health trusts but also within acute, primary care, health and justice and community pharmacy settings.

Multidisciplinary team working is the cornerstone of mental health care, particularly within secondary care settings. Therefore pharmacy professionals require excellent team working ability to be able to contribute evidence based medicines information and guidance for mental and physical health problems of service users meaningfully and effectively within health care teams, or as autonomously practitioners, in which ever sector they work in. Mental health pharmacists and pharmacy technicians should have excellent interpersonal skills and be able to adapt their communication to discuss, listen and translate often complex medicines information, in collaboration with service users without judgement. They should remain interested in people’s health and provide preventative and proactive medicines advice, signposting as relevant

**Training and development**

Pharmacists and technicians working in mental health settings require well developed general physical health knowledge and skills to be able to provide holistic care for service users. Development opportunities exist to provide general physical health care whilst specialising in mental health therapeutics.

Mental health pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are required to develop their knowledge of mental health medicines to optimise medicines use and individualise care. Opportunities to extend mental health therapeutics for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are provided by postgraduate long courses such as the Certificate or Diploma in Psychiatric Therapeutics (Aston University) or bespoke residential training courses provided by the College of Mental Health Pharmacy [CMHP], a charity dedicated to advancing education in the practice of mental health pharmacy. Experience and training in consultation skills to ensure effective discussions of medicines occurs is essential in all areas of pharmacy practice but awareness of issues such as consent, insight, stigma should also be implicit within consultation with service users with mental health problems. HEE have published a Core Mental Health Competency Framework which collates the skills, knowledge and behaviours that pharmacy professionals should be able to demonstrate when supporting individuals with mental health problems, within their sector of practice.

Additionally, the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education [CPPE] has a mental health gateway page available to registered pharmacy professionals with additional resources.