

Position Statement

BOPA is committed to supporting the evolving role of community pharmacy in the earlier detection of cancer to improve patient outcomes

In the UK, cancer is a major cause of mortality, and the 5-year survival is significantly lower than other countries in Northern Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded delays in cancer diagnosis, and this is further amplified by health inequalities where areas of high deprivation have higher rates of delayed diagnosis. Community pharmacy teams are ideally positioned to improve capacity within the system to provide equity of access and uncover 'missing diagnoses'.

In 2019, the BOPA vision was announced and included a statement of support for the evolving role of community pharmacy in cancer care. This includes key roles in early diagnosis, care closer to home and the support of people living with and beyond cancer (LWBC) through side effect management and pre- and rehabilitation.

As part of this ongoing commitment to support community pharmacy teams provide these services, BOPA has developed the 'Let's Communicate Cancer' educational package. This award-winning training programme is tailored to meet the educational needs of all community pharmacy staff and provides them with the skills to deliver effective care and support to patients with cancer.

BOPA supports the recent announcement from NHSE/I about the upcoming pilots to test direct referral for suspected cancer from community pharmacy. However, we believe that cancer alliances who will host the pilots should be given sufficient time to engage with all relevant stakeholders, tailor the pilot according to area needs, upskill the workforce involved and consider feedback loops, amongst other considerations. Any service developed should be simple to use for community pharmacy staff who perform a wide range of clinical services.

BOPA is preparing a systematic review that will investigate all published community pharmacy interventions for the early detection of cancer and will utilise the shared learning to support the upcoming pilots.

BOPA Community Pharmacy sub-committee