

BOPA Vision for Oncology Pharmacy Practitioners

Synopsis v 3.0

A group of oncology pharmacy professionals with representatives from each sector of the profession have come together in order to develop a vision for oncology pharmacy practitioners. This vision shall expand the evidence base demonstrating the impact of oncology pharmacy practitioners.

This paper presents a summary of the aims, objectives and areas of influence.

Aim

- Position BOPA as a central stakeholder for cancer services across the NHS
- Align oncology pharmacy roles with the national direction and arising patient needs
- Showcase impact of the existing oncology pharmacy practitioners
- Promote discussions and address current and future challenges

Objectives

- To showcase the significance of the contribution of oncology pharmacy practitioners
- To highlight to the pharmacy workforce, the potential roles for oncology pharmacy practitioners. (case studies from across the country)
- To demonstrate the various education and training pathways that can support the evolving careers of oncology pharmacy practitioners
- To define pathways of impact for the future and outline the requirements of the oncology pharmacy workforce to meet increasing future challenges
- To create opportunities for oncology pharmacy practitioners and increase the appeal of oncology pharmacy practice as a career
- To celebrate the excellence and innovation of oncology pharmacy practice.
- To increase public understanding of what oncology pharmacy practitioners do and how they can benefit patients
- Have alignment with other key stakeholder visions within the wider pharmacy and oncology arena

In order to achieve our aims and objectives, the BOPA vision has been divided into four streams: Academic, Primary care, Hospital and Industry with several cross-cutting themes such as technology and research.

Academic Stream

This stream encompasses the journey from undergraduate education to post graduate qualifications/degrees and personal development for both pharmacists and technicians. This will provide a roadmap for opportunities and career progression allowing the pharmacist or technician to visualise where an oncology pharmacy career can take them.

BOPA needs to be at the forefront in highlighting these opportunities to undergraduates and foundation year pharmacists in order to ensure that oncology pharmacy is a highly desirable career option.

This vision document also aims to inform and influence undergraduate curricula and post graduate programmes to provide adequate oncology education and training for current and future oncology pharmacy practitioners with a view to ensuring that oncology pharmacy practitioners are prepared for the challenges and opportunities for the next decade

An example of this commitment to the education of future and non-specialised healthcare professionals, BOPA has recently launched an e-learning programme ([Let's Communicate Cancer](#)) of bite-sized videos, animations, quizzes and slide shows designed to build the confidence and knowledge of healthcare professionals in oncology.

Oncology pharmacy technicians are an essential part of the current oncology pharmacy workforce and one which will have to increase further in order to meet demand. Currently, the education and training of technicians is generic with limited opportunities for specialisation programmes for career planning and enhancement. With this vision, BOPA will be a pioneer in providing a framework for the training and education of oncology pharmacy technicians.

Primary Care and Community Stream

Community and primary care pharmacy has, up until this point remained on the periphery of oncology pharmacy despite some exemplar work by some to bridge the gap.

This stream will describe the fundamental role oncology pharmacy has within primary care and how this could be further expanded for the benefit of cancer patients. It will cover prevention, early diagnosis, treatment pathways and living with and beyond cancer (LWBC).

By collating innovative case studies, the strategy is to create opportunities for oncology pharmacy practitioners within primary care by highlighting new pathways of care that includes but is not limited to early diagnosis services within community pharmacy, care closer to home and the support of people LWBC through side effect management, pre and post-habilitation roles within primary care networks.

An example of this work is the 'Not Normal for You' service that was led and piloted by one of BOPA's community pharmacy members Dr. Jackie Lewis. The pilot ran over 6 months where community pharmacy team members engaged with member of the

public presenting with symptoms that were not normal for them and encouraging referral. The pilot was successful showing that 63% of service users who were given a referral card went to visit their GP.

There is also the need to explore and support the role of community pharmacy technicians with specialist oncology knowledge.

There will be a focus on linking primary care and community pharmacy teams with their secondary care counterparts to allow for seamless transition for the patient from one care sector to another.

Hospital Stream

The healthcare system and the patients it cares for are constantly evolving and growing. This mandates an agile approach to the workforce planning within oncology pharmacy which would advocate for creating new services and working across boundaries.

The pharmacy workforce comprises pharmacy technicians and pharmacists, as well as support staff. Each role is vital and this vision considers how best to create a robust career pathway for everyone, enabling people to achieve their full potential, while making the best use of skills and, importantly, meeting the demands of the healthcare system. This which includes an increased requirement to use data to drive both population level and personalised improvements in practice and care and the impact of digitalisation will have on the oncology pharmacy workforce. This work is an important step in understanding the current and future roles of pharmacy technicians across different sectors of practice.

The hospital stream working group focusses on embracing the developments and changes that we have seen to date. This includes reflecting on some key milestones in the past few years such as

- Consultant pharmacists
 - This became a standardised recognised and approved role in the NHS in 2005. With numbers growing across specialities in the years following this. This was followed by regulations allowing pharmacists to become independent prescribers in 2006.
- Pharmacy technician registration
 - This was introduced in in 2011, allowing simple but significant changes such as checking of controlled drugs to be another door opened to this part of the profession. This was simple but significant because a simple change as this allowed for a greater autonomy of this side of the profession. This, coupled with an advent of the standard NHS contract requiring electronic prescribing of chemotherapy around 2014, meant electronic prescriptions can be screened remotely allowing technician led dispensaries to be a more accessible venture, releasing pharmacists to provide expertise in a different but more impactful manner.

Some of the successes that should be highlighted include the initiation of completely pharmacist led clinics as well as the development of the microguide app; a platform for the whole MDT to access local and national guidelines on the treatment of infection. Both initiatives started by a consultant pharmacist that have spread across the NHS.

In the future, we envisage a greater number of tasks being taken on by the highly competent and driven pharmacy technicians with roles previously held by a technician being grasped by the assistant technicians, releasing each of the cohorts of professions before to take on wider roles. Greater roles will be seen in commissioning, and genomics aided and aided by technologies and even use of AI.

The challenge of this work stream is, therefore, vast. For this reason, learning from recent history, it is important to understand the diversity of roles across the profession. The significant part of this has been born from innovation. Whilst recognising the associated benefits, structuring learning in order to provide frameworks for standards for oncology hospital pharmacists may potentially suppress some of the innovation we have witnessed. This remains a key issue to address which requires open and inclusive discussions aided by examples from across the NHS.

Industry Stream

This stream will highlight the transferable skills that oncology pharmacy practitioners possess. These unique skills can support a wide variety of spectrum within the pharmaceutical industry.

We have identified four key areas where this influence could be delivered through the varied roles within this field

1. Partnerships with NHS providers in order to support new models of care. Examples include:
 - Proof of concept clinics have been seen across many NHS providers. Medical teams within the pharmaceutical industry, often with a pharmacy background, have worked in partnership with oncology pharmacy teams developing clinics aiming at supporting patient with cancer and long term conditions.
 - Delivery of care models e.g. care close to home, homecare, and self-administration
2. Education and training
 - Collaborative projects with professional care organisations for gaps across care settings
 - Educational webinars and advisory boards
3. Research
 - Practice based research & clinical trials
 - Patient outcomes and experience

4. Resource for clinical information
 - Data on toxicity and efficacy
 - Pharmaceutical issues e.g. crushing po SACT

This vision will summarise the various opportunities and roles where patient care can be directly influenced and improved at a large scale. This shall inspire other professionals who wish to pursue a flexible career that incorporates both industry alongside other sectors.