

**Policy Statement on the Role of the Pharmacist
In Disease State Monitoring, Screening, Testing or Risk Assessment Activities**

Advances in technology have resulted in the public being able to purchase self-testing products, or access devices outside of conventional settings, for screening, diagnosing, and monitoring diseases and medical conditions and for monitoring drug therapies. These products and services are becoming components of disease education and management programs, preventive care, and primary care activities provided by pharmacists. Many are sold or available in pharmacies or are part of activities such as point-of-care testing, client education, screening or disease state risk assessment clinics held in pharmacies.

Pharmacists, other health professionals, the public and authorities question whether this is an appropriate role for the pharmacist, and whether current practices achieve quality. When quality is sub-optimal, many are concerned with public confusion over the role of the pharmacist and the validity of the results, while others are concerned that this generates unjustifiable referrals and utilization of other health care resources. Conversely, limited access to these services in the conventional system and their availability from alternate sources such as pharmacies, combined with increasing interest in wellness and personal responsibility for health, have stimulated considerable public demand. Proponents argue that the public should have access to these services, as they are safe and the public is capable of understanding the limitations. Others argue they may not be entirely effective. Therefore, this document examines the role of the pharmacist and provides pharmacists with guidance in providing these products and services to:

- achieve healthy outcomes;
- foster collaboration with other members of the health care team;
- contribute to the prudent use of health care resources; and,
- minimize public confusion.

Council policy is that the scope of practice of the pharmacist is based on the concept of pharmaceutical care. It is defined as “the responsible provision of drug therapy for the purpose of achieving definite outcomes that improve a patient's quality of life” (Hepler, D. and Strand, L: Am J Hosp Pharm 1990; 47:533-43). The goals of pharmaceutical care are for the pharmacist to establish a relationship with the patient to identify, solve and prevent the patient's drug-related problems. Therefore, monitoring, diagnostic, screening, risk assessment, point-of-care testing or educational products and activities offered in the pharmacy as services of the pharmacist must be within the scope of practice of the pharmacist and support pharmaceutical care. This means that:

1. The pharmacist must establish or maintain a relationship with the patient;
2. The activity is intended to prevent, identify or resolve an actual or potential drug related problem;
3. The personnel operating the equipment or device, interpreting the results and educating the patient are competent to do so. This may mean engaging other health professionals who are competent in these areas;

4. Any test that is conducted must be scientifically valid. Sufficient evidence must exist to support the reliability of the test;
5. The activity is conducted in a manner that protects the privacy of the patient;
6. Pharmacists must cooperate with the patient's physician. This includes disclosing relevant information to the physician with the patient's consent, and providing the physician with an appropriate recommendation;
7. Pharmacists must comply with the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists statement "Role of the Pharmacist in the Distribution of Diagnostic Products and Laboratory and Diagnostic Testing". In particular, pharmacists must comply with paragraph 8 in that statement if conducting point-of-care testing;
8. Pharmacists must comply with relevant legislation including *The Radiation Health and Safety Act* and *The Medical Laboratory Licensing Act*. Pharmacists should seek advice from the Radiation Safety Unit of the Occupational Health and Safety Division of Saskatchewan Labour on radiation emitting devices. Pharmacists should also seek the advice of Saskatchewan Health, Laboratory Licensing Program to determine whether any testing being considered falls within the scope of *The Medical Laboratory Licensing Act* and whether such tests meet accepted standards for competency of personnel, and instrument, equipment and testing proficiency;
9. Where an activity has limitations in quality, such as limitations in the reliability of test results, pharmacists must disclose these limitations in writing to the patient; and,
10. Disease state screening programs may only be promoted to the public in a professional manner that is consistent with this statement and any applicable laws, and without limiting the generality of the foregoing:
 - Uses pharmacy resources appropriately enabling pharmacists to follow up properly with the patient;
 - Referring patients to other health services providers when appropriate;
 - Taking reasonable steps to ensure that those who need the service receive it; and,
 - Avoiding conflicts of interest that arise when such activities result in the purchase of goods and services that limit the patient's right of choice, or that may not be needed.

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