

NMS - a pharmacy team approach

Skill mix refers to the skills and experience of staff, ie. their continuing education and professional development, years of experience, and how they bring these together to influence their professional judgement. Employing an appropriate skill mix approach when implementing the New Medicine Service (NMS) in community pharmacy will ensure that staff utilise their individual skills to engage and actively promote the benefits of the service to potential patients thereby ensuring the success of the service.

To make the New Medicine Service a success for patients (and also pharmacy!) there needs to be a committed team approach. The pharmacy team needs to be motivated to deliver this very important new service and, at an early stage and ideally before implementation, all pharmacy support staff should receive training to help them understand how NMS will benefit patients and the pharmacy.

Undoubtedly there will be concerns about how to fit this new service into the already busy workload of community pharmacy. Key to this is identifying the main elements of the service and importantly realising how to manage them in the pharmacy environment. Pharmacists (be they a contractor, employee or a self-employed locum) need to work very closely with pharmacy support staff (medicines counter assistants, dispensing assistants and pharmacy technicians) to facilitate the implementation and smooth running of the NMS. Many elements of the NMS do not necessarily need to be handled by the pharmacist, indeed it may be that for some roles the medicines counter assistants or other members of the pharmacy team may be more appropriate. One way to approach NMS implementation and staff responsibilities is to hold a staff meeting during which the pharmacy team can discuss the individual elements of the service and identify which team members are best placed to undertake each task.

Detailed below are a number of NMS elements which you can consider delegating to other members of the pharmacy team:

- Training and staff awareness – creating a shared understanding of NMS
- Promoting and the marketing of the service as a free NHS service to patients, prescribers and other practice staff
- Identifying the best and most efficient ways of recruiting patients (eg. using PMR data, use of NMS stickers)
- Patient appointments – booking appointments, reminding patients, monitoring ‘no shows’
- Logging outcomes (eg. number of consultations undertaken)
- Submission of information to the PCT and NHS BSA for payment

It will also be helpful to use the **NPA SOP: New Medicine Service** when planning NMS implementation and delegating roles and responsibilities. This can be downloaded from the NPA website www.npa.co.uk/nms