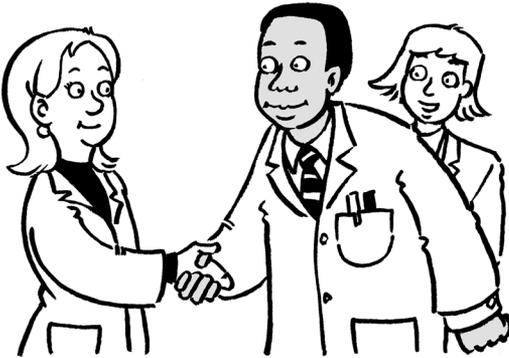


Section 1

Pre-registration trainees



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Expectations of the pre-registration placement

Congratulations! You've just got yourself a Masters degree and had the graduation ceremony and have got yourself a job as a 'pre-registration pharmacist'. You're on top of the world! You've seen it all and done it all during your 4 years at university and you can't wait to start your pre-reg placement to put into practice everything that you've learned.

Be careful though! We're warning you now that, when you start your pre-reg placement, you will NOT be treated as a 'pharmacist' even though 'pre-registration pharmacist' is your job title. You will also not *feel* like a pharmacist. The position that you hold is definitely a trainee position, and you are there to learn, on top of delivering some aspect of the pharmacy service. You will feel like you have come from the top of the pile and landed firmly at the bottom once again. And you will probably get that feeling every time that you start a new rotation and learn a new skill.

Another word of warning is that, although you are a 'pre-registration pharmacist', you are not legally allowed to call yourself a 'pharmacist' until you are registered with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) as a registered, practising pharmacist, and that happens only when you have fulfilled all of the RPSGB performance standards and passed the registration examination, and your pre-reg tutor has signed you off as being fit to be a pharmacist. So, do NOT introduce yourself as a pharmacist to patients or other healthcare professionals, because you can't call yourself that – yet.

You need to think about how you are going to introduce yourself to patients and other healthcare staff. It is worth noting that pre-reg house officers (PRHOs) are qualified doctors in their first years of foundation training, and are known as FY1s or FY2s, whereas a pre-reg pharmacist has not yet qualified as a pharmacist. Some pre-reg call themselves students or trainees whereas others say that they are 'from pharmacy'. You will need to find out from your workplace what their preference for you is because to call yourself a pharmacist when you are not is illegal.

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When you start work, expectations from the staff will vary wildly. This may be slightly confusing. What standing you have in your pharmacy as a 'pre-reg' depends entirely on the culture of your workplace, and more specifically on the views that the people with whom you work have with regard to 'pre-regs'. It also depends on what jobs a pre-reg is supposed to do at your workplace. In some hospitals you will be given a lot of responsibility and chucked in at the deep end right from the start, but in others your level of responsibility will grow as you progress throughout the training year. In addition, some people 'like' pre-regs and understand the whole point of pre-reg training, but many others do not!

The confusion is understandable because, although you are not students anymore, you are certainly not independent practitioners yet; you still need a lot of training (especially at the beginning of the year) to enable you to do anything at all and, by the end of the training year, you are expected to be a fully functioning pharmacist and may well be in charge of the people who have given you training throughout your pre-reg year.

'In terms of making decisions I feel very protected because I'm not allowed to do anything without supervision. Having come from a community background where I used to act with some autonomy, I'm finding this supervision smothering already.'

The first thing to say about your pre-reg placement is that you are a salaried employee, and therefore you are being paid to work. Becoming an actual employee may come as a bit of a shock to many of you, but this change in your status means that there needs to be a corresponding change of attitude.

As a student, did you find it hard to get out of bed and turn up to your 9 am lectures? Did you decide where and which classes you attended? Did you somehow accidentally end up having 3-hour lunch breaks? Did you work half-heartedly at some of the subjects that you weren't so interested in? Were you always late, if you ever showed up at all?

Of course you did – you were a student! Needless to say, this type of behaviour would be frowned upon in a workplace.

When you start work you need to bear in mind some really simple things that people who have had some experience of (having worked before) might take for granted.

As you will be working in a workplace, so you will be working with professionals and so you need to turn up to work on time and look

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professional (no more uni days). You will be working with many different types of professionals within the workplace and also with many different types of people as patients, so you need to present a 'professional' persona while in the workplace.

So, what do we mean exactly when we say 'professional'? If you look at a dictionary the definition is something like the following (from <http://dictionary.reference.com>):

1. Following an occupation as a means of livelihood or for gain: a *professional builder*.
2. Of, pertaining to, or connected with a profession: *professional studies*.
3. Appropriate to a profession: *professional objectivity*.
4. Engaged in one of the learned professions: *a lawyer is a professional person*.
5. Following as a business an occupation ordinarily engaged in as a pastime: *a professional golfer*.
6. Making a business or constant practice of something not properly to be regarded as a business: 'A salesman,' he said, 'is a professional optimist.'
7. Undertaken or engaged in as a means of livelihood or for gain: *professional baseball*.
8. Of or for a professional person or his or her place of business or work: *a professional apartment; professional equipment*.
9. Done by a professional; expert: *professional car repairs*.

Being a professional is defined as the following (from <http://dictionary.reference.com>):

- A person who belongs to one of the professions, especially one of the learned professions.
- A person who earns a living in a sport or other occupation frequently engaged in by amateurs: *golf professional*.
- An expert player, as of golf or tennis, serving as a teacher, consultant, performer or contestant: *pro*.
- A person who is expert at his or her work: *you can tell by her comments that this editor is a real professional*.

A more academic example of professionalism is:

'Professionalism is demonstrated through a foundation of clinical competence, communication skills, and ethical and legal understanding upon which is built the aspiration to and wise application of the principles of professionalism, excellence, humanism, accountability & altruism.' (Stern, 2006, page 19)

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Figure 1.1 A definition of professionalism. (Reproduced with permission from Stern, 2006.)

In professionalism:

- excellence is a commitment to competence and a desire to exceed ordinary standards
- accountability includes self-regulation, standard setting, managing conflicts of interest and the acceptance of responsibility
- altruism is ensuring that pharmacists act in the best interests of patients and not self-interest
- humanism is behaving with respect, compassion, empathy, honour and integrity.

We actually don't mean any of the above when we say that you need to be 'professional'! Being professional (to us) means that you need to display a set of behaviours that would normally be acceptable for somebody who has the same standing, and in the same environment as you, providing a particular service. So, what do you need to do to be professional? We think that there are many different facets, including the following:

- **Timekeeping:** being on time is very important and completing work to deadlines is also very important. When you are in your rotations, you are expected to do many things at the same time, so organising and prioritising your work to enable you to deliver all your work to the required deadlines are important.
- **Dressing appropriately:** different workplaces have different dress codes, so the key word here is 'appropriately'. You need to measure yourself by what is deemed acceptable in the workplace that you are in.

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Whatever the dress code is, try to create a professional image. Make sure that you wear clean and appropriate clothing, and pay attention to grooming and personal cleanliness. How would it make you feel if you went to a hospital and were confronted by staff who were not very clean? It would make you think that the hospital was not clean, which brings on the fact that you will be seen by patients as a representative of your organisation and not necessarily as an individual. This is something to bear in mind when you present yourself to the outside world.

- Another issue working in healthcare is knowing what you are talking about. At university, if you do not know something you can bluff your way through and hope that you can pick up some points in an exam somewhere along the way; in a work situation, probably involving patients' wellbeing, you had better be sure that you check your facts otherwise harm may come to them and that is not acceptable.
- Completing work to deadlines is a very important skill to develop too – at university maybe your final mark might have suffered due to the late handing in of work; in a work environment, once again, finding the right answer in time may prevent harm to your patient.
- Having an approachable and helpful persona helps you to fit into the work team.
- Being respectful to other people without being a pushover is also a very useful (but hard) skill to have. You need to present yourself in a business-like manner, whether you interact with people in person, on the phone, via email or by writing.
- Also, no matter whether or not you did well in your degree, the test of a professional is how all that knowledge is applied in the workplace, which means that you need to show some common sense. No one said that being professional was going to be easy!

As part of your employment contract you will have an allocated number of days that you can take off as annual leave; the current number of days is 27 and, in some organisations, is split pro rata into the NHS year (April to March), meaning that you need to have taken a number of days by the end of March of your year, with the rest being carried forward into the remainder of your year.

During your university days, there would have been regular breaks at the start/end and mid-semester – half-term holidays do not feature! This means that you should try to spread your annual leave evenly throughout the year; in some rotations they may require you to take a certain proportion of your allowance to ensure that you do not take lots of annual leave in one block, leaving a particular rotation without a pre-reg for a long time. As you

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will probably be the newest member of staff, and one of the most junior, you will have very little time in which to think about, and apply for, annual leave hotspots such as the Christmas/New Year period; unless you can get in quick enough and plead your case, you may find yourself working some of this time.

Please be aware that the RPSGB states that you need to have completed a certain number of weeks of training by the time that you take your exam. This means that if you have had any extended period of sickness you will need to check whether or not you are eligible to sit the registration exam under the RPSGB byelaws; more information can be obtained from your pre-reg tutor or manager. If you have been sick for an extended period of time, you may be asked to extend your pre-reg training period to comply with the minimum number of weeks or you may need to forfeit some of your annual leave allocation. This is at the discretion of your pre-reg tutor who will seek guidance from both the RPSGB and the human resources team at the hospital.

Also, remember that, unlike university where you chose to be in classes when you wanted to, as an employee you are required to turn up to work unless you have notified your relevant managers otherwise. Any unauthorised absence from work will probably be dealt with severely in a formal manner. There are health and safety issues surrounding everybody knowing where you are.

Wherever you are doing your pre-reg placement you will have a range of different learning experiences offered to you. These 'learning experiences' are normally presented as a number of different rotations in different areas of the pharmacy. While at university, you were told what to learn and how to learn it. During your pre-reg placement, the situation is very different. You will be treated as an adult and need to take responsibility for your own learning.

While you work through your various rotations, it can be very easy to blindly do what people tell you to do without thinking about things. It is up to you to make the most of your pre-reg year. The motivation for your success in this year should come from within.

The flipside to this is that you mustn't try to run before you can walk. Remember that you must learn the mundane and routine things first, so that you have a good grounding of how things work (such as how medicines are procured, stored and distributed to the wards), before you move on to learning the more complicated, 'sexy', clinical things. Remember that everything that you learn during your pre-reg year is important, even though you may not know the relevance of what you are doing at the time.

We always say to our tutees: 'We don't mind if you don't work hard during your pre-reg year and don't pass your exam; we've done our pre-reg year, we've done our registration exam.' We think that whoever is looking

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after you in your rotations will have a similar view. It is not their responsibility to make sure that you learn from what you do. It's YOURS!

Until now you have probably only ever hung around with people whom you liked – it makes sense NOT to be with people whom you don't like. But, in a work environment, you may not have the opportunity to avoid people whom you do not like. It is hard, but you need to learn the art of working with people with whom you do not get on. So just bear in mind that you may not like everybody with whom you work, and they may not necessarily like you either, but in a workplace there are jobs to be done and that is the most important thing.

You will be working in many different teams during your pre-reg training year, so you need to develop some team-working skills. At first, it is likely that you will be treated as the most junior member of staff – as you probably know the least! As the training year progresses, your role will constantly change so that, by the end of the year, your role in the pharmacy team is significantly different to that at the start of the year. You will make that transition from student to professional, from trainee to pharmacist.

Bear in mind that it is not just pharmacists who work in a pharmacy or in a hospital. Try not to have any preconceived ideas as to what role befits different people – you will be surprised! And you will find that you are managed by technicians and assistants on a daily basis.

WHAT IS CLINICAL PHARMACY AND WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

One final point about 'clinical pharmacy': spending time on wards does not necessarily guarantee that you are doing 'clinical pharmacy'. What is this 'clinical pharmacy' and what does it mean to be a clinical pharmacist? We believe that ALL pharmacy is clinical pharmacy, whether you are on the wards or working in distribution, or anywhere else. Clinical pharmacy happens in a person's head – it is the thought behind what you are doing. This means that every pharmacist is a clinical pharmacist, whatever sector he or she is working in, and whatever setting he or she is practising in. Make sure that, wherever you are and whatever you are doing, you are training yourself to be a 'clinical pharmacist'.

'In my first rotation, the staff expected a lot from me right from the very beginning. Maybe staff should have lower expectations if pre-regs are going there for first rotation and the first week should be orientation, and there should be no unsupervised working in the first part of the rotation.'

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‘There were uncertain expectations in my first rotation. The first week I was shown things, and then in the second week I was doing everything which was actually a very steep learning curve!’

‘My first rotation was on the surgical wards. It was a brilliant rotation; I really enjoyed it. I went in thinking that it was going to be crap – they only know how to cut things out, but they don’t know about medicines, so I felt like I made quite a lot of input, which was good.’

TOP TIPS

- Being thrown in at the deep end can be an opportunity to show what you can do
- You are paid a decent salary; make sure that you earn it
- The pre-reg year is part of your professional training
- Think about what you consider as a professional and where you are now
- Manage your expectations in terms of what you want and what your employer can provide

REFERENCE

Stern DT. *Measuring Medical Professionalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.