

INTRODUCING THE HEALTHY LIVING PHARMACY

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ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the concept of a 'Healthy Living Pharmacy' (HLP). The movement has its origin in the South of England in response to a 2008 government policy document. This aimed to broaden the role of pharmacies beyond that of suppliers of medicines, to encompass the provision of information to guide self-care and healthy lifestyles in the communities that they serve. To be awarded HLP status pharmacies must demonstrate the suitability of their premises, systems and resources, and a commitment to a healthy living ethos illustrated by a proactive approach to self-care and healthy lifestyles in their community. Each HLP must have at least one 'Health Champion' trained and accredited to provide health and wellbeing advice to customers.

As governments around the world face common challenges, such as an aging population and an explosion in illness linked to lifestyle, there is a need for an increased focus on prevention and improvement of the public's health. As an integral part of their communities, pharmacies can position themselves as the most accessible source of information on healthy living, harm reduction and preventative health measures.

There is an increasing body of evidence to support the impact that Healthy Living Pharmacies have on the health of their communities. The movement is growing with over one thousand Healthy Living Pharmacies in England and there is interest in adopting the model more broadly in the UK and globally.

Key words: Healthy Living Pharmacies, Health Champions, community health, lifestyle diseases.

BACKGROUND

Healthy Living Pharmacy (HLP) is a concept that was initially developed in the city of Portsmouth in the south of England. The initiative has its origins in a government ambition in the 2008 White Paper, *Pharmacy in England: building on strengths, delivering the future*¹. This policy document aimed to move community pharmacies from being just suppliers of medicines to become *Healthy Living Centres* providing self-care advice and treatment for common ailments and healthy lifestyle interventions in addition to the safe supply and use of prescribed medicines.

There are currently over 1000 HLPs in England, and Public Health England has committed their support for extending the role of community pharmacy in the delivery of public health services and accelerating the roll out of the Healthy Living Pharmacy programme². Northern Ireland has adopted the principles of the model under its *Health+ Pharmacy initiative* and there is now increasing interest in the concept globally.

THE HEALTHY LIVING PHARMACY CONCEPT

Pharmacies are well placed to support the health and wellbeing of the population due to their accessibility and the skills within the pharmacy team. HLPs have the public's health at the heart of what they do and have a proven track record of delivering high quality self care and public health services such as common ailment advice and treatment, addressing smoking, obesity, sexual health, alcohol and harm reduction. By offering a range of high quality services, HLPs can contribute towards improving access to supported self-care and to reducing health inequalities.

Governments across the world are facing financial challenges plus increased and ageing populations and health inequalities. The need for cost-effective treatment of those who are ill and keeping them out of hospital is a common theme.

The population need for effective use of medicines

Medicines are the most frequent clinical intervention and the value of optimising safe and effective use of both purchased and prescribed medicines, as part of the system cost rather than just reducing the cost of the medicine itself, is increasingly a focus of attention.

For example, NHS England's *Five Year Forward View*³ states the aim of:

'Helping patients get the right care, at the right time, in the right place, making more appropriate use of primary care, community mental health teams, ambulance services and community pharmacies'

Putting community pharmacies at the heart of efforts to improve the effective use of medicines is a logical extension of their traditional role in medicine supply. However, there is recognition that pharmacies are uniquely positioned to broaden their role into promoting health.

The role of the pharmacy in preventing ill health

NHS England recognises the need to step up investment in prevention and protection measures to stop people becoming ill. This includes educating the public, supporting ownership of population and individual health, and offering accessible, effective interventions on healthy lifestyles including: reducing smoking, healthy diet, physical activity, healthy weight, sexual health, alcohol and other harm reduction plus vaccination services. To support this, the *Five Year Forward View*¹ goes on to state that:

'the sustainability of the NHS, and the economic prosperity of Britain all now depend on a radical upgrade in prevention and public health. The NHS will therefore now back hard-hitting national action on obesity, smoking, alcohol and other major health risks.'

Pharmacies, being an integral part of the community, are well placed to offer services that improve the public's health and there is increasing evidence of the value of these interventions.

MAKING A COMMUNITY PHARMACY A HEALTHY LIVING PHARMACY

Before being awarded the HLP 'quality mark' a pharmacy must have at least one qualified Health Champion and have demonstrated that they meet a set of quality criteria, which are set around workforce development, premises and engagement. The pharmacy also has to demonstrate

consistent delivery of commissioned services to a high level, e.g. medicines support services and health improvement services.

A pharmacy must demonstrate a *healthy living ethos* and a proactive approach to health and self care before being issued their HLP status.

The importance of Health Champions

Within a community pharmacy, Health Champions (HCs) are members of the pharmacy team who are trained and accredited to provide customers with health and wellbeing advice. The key role of an HC is to provide customers with information about their health and signpost them to other community services (such as commissioned NHS Enhanced Services) that will help them to adopt healthier lifestyles and access the support they need to do so. HCs have achieved the Royal Society for Public Health (RPSH) Understanding Health Improvement Level 2 award⁴.

It is a key requirement for any pharmacy wishing to become an HLP to have at least one HC as part of their pharmacy team. However, even if not working within an HLP, HCs can also effectively support recruitment into, and delivery of, many pharmacy services and local health promotion events. Evidence shows that this role is beneficial to the individual, the pharmacy and the population it serves⁵.

Any member of the pharmacy team can become an HC. The HC training course will increase the communication skills of the individual and enable them to pro-actively enhance and promote health and wellbeing effectively. This can benefit the pharmacy's business as well as the individual personally.

Box 1 summarises some of the training available for Health Champions

TRAINING FOR HEALTH CHAMPIONS

There are many national and local organisations that provide accredited HC courses including the core Royal Society for Public Health's Understanding Health Improvement' Level 2 qualification⁶. This course consists of four modules followed by a Multiple Choice Question assessment:

- Inequalities in health
- How effective communication can support health messages
- Importance of promoting improvements in health and wellbeing
- Impact of behaviour change on health and wellbeing

In addition the RSPH offer other qualifications⁷ to further develop the skills and knowledge of a Health Champion:

- Level 2 Award in Applied Health Improvement
- Level 2 Award in Encouraging a Healthy Weight and Healthy Eating
- Level 2 Award in Encouraging Physical Activity
- Level 2 Award in Health Promotion (General Health and Wellbeing)
- Level 2 Award in Health Promotion (Oral Health)
- Level 2 Award in Supporting Smoking Cessation
- Level 2 Award in Understanding Alcohol Misuse
- Level 2 Award in Understanding Behaviour Change
- Level 2 Award in Understanding the Delivery of an NHS Health Check
- Level 2 Award in Understanding Dementia⁷

IMPACT OF HEALTHY LIVING PHARMACIES

Evaluations^{9,10,11}, of HLPs to date indicate that the HLP model is working in areas with different demography and geography. The reports demonstrate an increase in successful smoking quits, extensive delivery of alcohol brief interventions and advice, emergency contraception, targeted seasonal flu vaccinations, common ailments, NHS Health Checks, healthy diet, physical activity, healthy weight and pharmaceutical care services. The Local Government Association has published *Community Pharmacy's Role in Public Health*¹² which contains a number of case studies.

An example of improved pharmaceutical care is in people with asthma or COPD who had a medicines use review with their pharmacist. This identified a need for improved inhaler technique and the majority of those who were smokers accepted help to stop smoking. Early data shows improvement of symptom control on return to the pharmacy six months later. The NHS Confederation has published *Healthcare on the High Street*¹³ with a number of pharmacy case studies.

CONCLUSION: BENEFITS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Around 70% of people who visit pharmacies do not regularly access other health care services so HLPs can provide health and wellbeing support to people in their community that may be outside the reach of other resources. Improved choice and access to early interventions on issues such as common ailments, optimal medicines use, obesity, alcohol, sexual health and smoking could improve outcomes in the longer term and therefore positively impact cost of care in the future.

This short introduction to the concept of Healthy Pharmacies – and the role within them of Health Champions – serves to highlight the potential that these have for improving public health. The use of pharmacies to deliver specific health improvement measures and as centres for help and advice on healthy lifestyle is a logical extension of their role as sources of medicines and medicine-related advice. Healthy Living pharmacies can an accessible and powerful resource to improve public health and reduce the burden of illness in the communities that they serve.

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