

Tips on Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Risk management and harm minimisation strategies are part of the new contract clinical governance requirements. From **January 1, 2005** written Standard Operating Procedures covering dispensing related activities within individual pharmacies became a professional requirement of the RPSGB, to allow benchmarking of current practice and ensure that systems used within pharmacies are safe.

New contract Essential service 8 (clinical governance) states that SOPs should cover all areas specified by the RPSGB as a minimum and should be produced to cover all Advanced and Enhanced services. PCTs will be checking that SOPs are in place after **October 1, 2005** as part of the monitoring of clinical governance under the new contract.

It is good practice to have SOPs for all procedures carried out in the pharmacy.

So to help you, here are some tips...

1. Analyse what processes are being carried out within the pharmacy and check which SOPs are in place and whether additional ones need to be written.
2. Refer to Medicines, Ethics and Practice: a guide for pharmacists (RPSGB) when preparing SOPs. This states that SOPs must:
 - a. specify in writing what is actually being done when, where and by whom on the individual pharmacy's premises;
 - b. specify the order of events applicable to the individual pharmacy under normal operating conditions to ensure safe systems of working; and
 - c. state clearly the name of the pharmacist under whose authority the SOP is prepared, along with the date of preparation.
3. Use resources available to assist you, e.g. NPA and wholesaler SOP templates.
4. Involve staff in preparing the SOPs to get 'buy in' and ensure that the order and activity are as practised.
5. Prepare an overarching document stating:
 - a. how the SOPs are to be used;
 - b. how they will be monitored;
 - c. the review process and frequency (at least every two years); and
 - d. what to do when deviation from the SOP occurs.
6. Make sure that all SOPs are readily available on the premises to all staff (including locums) at all times.
7. Ensure all staff (including locums) read and understand the SOPs and are informed of any changes.
8. Use SOPs to clarify roles within the pharmacy and for training new staff.
9. Use SOPs to contribute to the audit process and to help to assure the quality and consistency of the service.
10. Delegate tasks within SOPs according to the qualifications and competencies of the individual members of staff.
11. The pharmacist who is in day to day management of the pharmacy is accountable for the development and compliance of the SOPs.