

Introduction to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

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The development and implementation of SOPs is a clinical governance requirement, part of the NHS Plan, to put in place strategies for risk management and harm minimization, It is also a means by which quality and standards of service can be improved through systems and through improved ways of working.

"A standard operating procedure specifies in writing, what should be done, when, where and by whom".

Benefits of SOPs:

Ensure quality and consistency of service (best practice)

Opportunity to fully utilize the expertise of all members of the pharmacy team Enable pharmacists to delegate tasks and may free up time for other activities Role clarification (who does what)

Provides guidance, to locums and part-time staff Training tools for new members of staff

Provides a contribution to the audit process

Professional Accountability

Pharmacists are accountable for all decisions to supply medicines and offer advice and they must ensure that if any tasks are delegated, they are delegated to persons competent to perform them. The extent to which tasks can be delegated will depend on a number of factors specific to the pharmacy e.g. workload, layout, qualifications and capabilities of staff.

The RPSGB states that those who employ competent support staff will be able to use SOPs to safely delegate technical aspects of the dispensing process, potentially freeing up time for the development of clinical services such as medicines management.

Working with SOPs.

SOPs should help to ensure that, other than in exceptional circumstances, recommended procedures are followed at all times. Their introduction provides an opportunity for pharmacists to define and assess their own practice and to communicate this to all staff and to help improve team working within the pharmacy. As well as clarifying staff roles, it is a good opportunity for staff training and development and to emphasize any changes to current practice.

It is important that SOPs are easily available to relevant staff at all times. This is particularly important in the case of locums.

Implementation of SOPs

There will be no single template that can be applied to all pharmacies due to different workloads, layouts, different qualifications and capabilities of staff, etc

Standard templates /frameworks will be provided by John Dent Chemist to be implemented in each pharmacy, If you believe the SOP is not appropriate to your pharmacy and/or that it needs amendment, then please contact the Superintendent Pharmacist at New Square.

1. Any individual amendments will be agreed and recorded, with a copy retained at the Superintendent's office.

2. Each member of staff should have the SOP process explained to them, and the procedures, which are their responsibility, should be clearly understood by them. Their name should be written into the "Responsibility" section, with the numbers of the procedures relevant to them, written alongside. The member of staff should then initial this entry and date it, to confirm this.

3. The pharmacist in charge of the pharmacy should sign and date the bottom of the SOP when all relevant staff have been trained in the procedures.

Keeping SOPS up to date

Review

It is important that SOP should be up to date and regularly reviewed to allow for changes in practice or circumstances e.g. legislative changes, staff changes.

The pharmacist in charge should keep staff changes and responsibilities updated on the SOP document, by amending the "Responsibilities" section.

Any ongoing suggestions to modify or improve SOPs must be made to the Superintendent Pharmacist - so that any changes can be formally agreed first and registered at the Superintendent's office,

In the absence of any obvious changes, RPSGB recommends that reviews should be undertaken at least once every two years.

Non-conformance

There may be exceptional times when it is necessary or appropriate to work outside a SOP e.g. in the event of computer breakdown

It is good practice to record incidences of non-conformance with SOPs. In some cases it may be possible to prepare SOP to be followed in the event of exceptional but predictable circumstances.

Monitoring Incidents

Monitoring incidents e.g. those occurring during the dispensing process. i.e. near misses as well as those which may reach the patient, is a useful means of reviewing procedures and identifying any that may need modifying.

Audit Trails

.Where SOP incorporate a requirement for audit trails, these should be based on specific, accountable activities. Audit trails will need to give details of the name(s) of the individual(s) concerned and will need to identify the accountable pharmacist

The first Standard Operating Procedures will cover the Dispensing Process, which the Society defines as a six-step process:

- Prescription receipt

- Pharmaceutical assessment

- Interventions and problem solving

- Assembly and labeling

- Checking procedures

- Transfer to patient

References

1. *Medicines Ethics 41 Practice -- RPSGB . Edition 26 (July 2002) p_97 "Guidance on developing and implementing standard operating procedures for dispensing "*.
2. *WCPPE package entitled SWEEP (The route to Effective Standard Operating Procedures) - available from CPPE. It recommended that you are familiar with the information in both of these documents. The CPPE package contains the tools and blank templates to develop specific procedures for your Staff*

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