

PROFESSIONAL REGULATION VS PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Your initial learning on this programme is to help you understand the difference between professional regulation and professional leadership.

Why do we have professional regulation?

Both pharmacist and pharmacy technician are protected titles. A protected title means you cannot call yourself by that name unless you are registered with the professional regulator or association, often after you have completed specific training.

In the same way that you can't call yourself a doctor of medicine, social worker or surveyor. From experience you expect them to have a specific level of expertise if someone says they have one of those titles.

So, the protected title is really to provide a level of protection to the public so that people who carry out these roles are safe to do so.

Who regulates pharmacy professionals?

In pharmacy it is the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) who regulates the profession in England, Wales and Scotland. This is both the professionals who are pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, and pharmacy retail premises (i.e. community pharmacies and online pharmacies).

They must all be registered with the GPhC, paying an annual fee and meeting certain standards to remain registered. If a professional or premises fall below those standards then they could be removed from the register, or have other sanctions or restrictions imposed on their practice.

The GPhC does not have any criminal prosecution powers, but they refer to the police if a criminal prosecution is required. In most cases this would take place before any GPhC sanctions occur.

Hospital pharmacies are not usually regulated with the GPhC unless they have an out-patient pharmacy that operates as a retail business. The regulation of their pharmacy services come under another regulator called the Care Quality Commission in England and you will learn more about that in the course. However all pharmacist and pharmacy technicians working in the hospital will need to be registered with the GPhC.

Why do we have a professional leadership body?

Our professional regulation is purely there to ensure public safety and confidence in the profession. However, who is there to represent the members of the profession and their interests? This is where a professional leadership body takes over. The Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK (APTUK) is the leadership body for pharmacy technicians. They represent their members to champion the profession, by influencing stakeholders to advance the development and progression of pharmacy technicians in pharmacy practice.

It is optional to join the organisation but in return for an annual membership fee they organise:

- an annual professional conference
- access to resources and newsletters to keep you up to date
- opportunities to contribute to the development of the profession via online surveys
- participate in APTUK committees, groups and forums
- opportunity to network at local branch meetings or other organised events