
DRAFT FIP STATEMENT OF POLICY

Strategic development of medicines information for the benefit of patients and users of medicines

Introduction

Medicines information is essential to empower patients and users of medicines to effectively engage in appropriate, quality and safe use of medicines. There is a wide range of information sources that medicine users may access. The effectiveness of this information is of importance to patients, as well as a range of stakeholders such as prescribers, pharmacists, other health care professionals, health regulatory authorities, and the pharmaceutical industry.

Providing unbiased and effective medicines information to patients and users of medicines is a priority for pharmacists, and underpins all health services delivered by pharmacists. More attention should be paid to coordinating and improving the quality of medicines information resources. There is potential to learn from the experience of other countries, especially from those with established medicines information policies and strategies. By assisting one another, a global approach to developing medicines information may be achieved and linked with medicines management policies.

Statement of Policy aims

The aims of this Statement are:

1. To expand on issues relevant to medicines information and the role of pharmacists and key stakeholders.
2. To emphasise the need for a strategic approach to the development of medicines information to promote high quality medicines information.

Background

The purpose of medicines information

The primary purpose of medicines information is to assist citizens, patients and health care professionals achieve safe and effective use of medicines. This includes providing information that allows the consumer/patient to make an informed decision about the appropriate selection and use of medicines. Users of medicines/patients value accurate, comprehensible, appropriate and



relevant information which can adequately inform them and assist them in effective self-management.

Sources of health and medicines information for patients and users

There is a range of sources of medicines information available to the public, including:

- Spoken information (from health care professionals).
- Written medicines information, e.g., medicines labelling and leaflets supplied with individual medicines.
- Written medicines information available from patient/health care professional organisations, health organisations, pharmaceutical companies and other organisations that communicate with patients.
- Websites providing medicines information
- Digital resources such as Apps, Twitter and Facebook.

Supporting the development of high quality written medicines information

In addition to appropriate content, the application of good information design and writing will ensure comprehensible printed and electronic medicines information. Suboptimal health literacy is a widespread issue within an international context, where health literacy (“the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions”¹) varies both within and between countries. These differences should be considered when developing medicines information tools, with particular attention given to other methods of communication and special formats, such as use of large font size, pictograms, audio versions, Braille, as well as mixed approaches (e.g. written and audio-visual).

The role of pharmacists

Pharmacists will continue to play a pivotal role in the provision of reliable, objective, understandable, non-promotional, accurate and appropriate written and spoken medicines information to the public and patients. As people increasingly access information from the Internet, pharmacists can act as a guide and interpreter, helping identify reliable sources of medicines information.

Strategic development of medicines information

Although medicines information is an integral part of health care, only a few countries have national medicines information strategies. Strategic development of medicines information is often included as part of national

¹ Nielsen-Bohman L, Panzer AM, and Kindig DA (Editors): Prescription to End Confusion (2004). Available at: <http://www.nap.edu/read/10883/chapter/4>



medicines policies, action plans or pharmacovigilance work. Pharmacists' expertise within a collaborative, inter-professional/inter-disciplinary team is essential to guide development and implementation of medicines information strategies within national medicines and health policies.

A medicines information strategy should be nationally embedded and allow for the development of new legislation and guidelines to advance the availability and quality of medicines information. The strategy should be guided by the evidence as well as highlight gaps which require further research.

Potential outcomes of strategic development of medicines information

The strategic development of medicines information is likely to benefit many parties and lead to many short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes.

Short-term outcomes include:

- Improved communication between patients, pharmacists, and other health care professionals.
- Better informed patients before, during, and after medication use, regarding their medicine(s), associated risks, benefits, and actions required.
- Increased cooperation and teamwork of all parties involved in developing high quality medicines information.
- Wider attention for medicines information activities and their importance for healthcare.

Medium-term outcomes include:

- Improved patients experience and satisfaction, for patients and/or caregivers who are actively involved in managing their health.
- Improved patient motivation to take a more active role in their treatment.
- Better access to reliable, high quality information.
- Improved communication between patient and health care professionals, and increased patients ability to manage their own health.
- Promote safe self-care and self-medication.
- Improved pharmacovigilance and promotion of safe and appropriate use of medicines along the continuum of health care provision and treatment.
- For the health care system as a whole: increased public confidence, improved cost effectiveness by the development of high quality, consistent information nationally, and strengthened partnerships between statutory and independent sector information and service providers.



Long-term outcomes include:

- Improved patient adherence and health status.
- Improved health literacy of patients, reduced inappropriate medication use, improved patient health outcomes, and lower health care costs.

AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, FIP RECOMMENDS THAT:

Governments:

1. Compile a national medicines policy which includes strategic development of medicines information.
2. Compile a national medicines information strategy to illustrate challenges and needs more explicitly
3. Develop policies where pharmacists are key in informing patients about medicines and encourage patients and users of medicines to seek advice from pharmacists regarding medicines and their use.
4. Give pharmacists economic incentives that recognise pharmacists' value in providing medicines information.
5. Provide or encourage the development of medicines information guidelines that assure high quality information, which is consistent amongst all health care professionals.
6. Integrate usability as a core outcome measure in policies and guidelines relevant to the development and evaluation of written medicines information to ensure fitness for purpose.
7. Provide resources and support to allow such work to be undertaken (including promoting and acknowledging the importance of medicines information).
8. Oversee the implementation of an accepted medicine information strategy and guidelines.
9. Develop and implement criteria for certifying or accrediting medicine information centres and medicine information resources in collaboration with professional and educational bodies.
10. Prohibit direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines.

Pharmaceutical industry:

1. Provide reliable information on their medicinal products to health care professionals (e.g. Summary of Product Characteristics (SmPC)) and to users of medicines (e.g. leaflets developed based on the relevant SmPC). This information should be updated regularly and based on up-to-date evidence gained from clinical trials.
2. Strive to provide information on both treatment benefits (e.g. number needed to treat (NNT)), risks (e.g. number needed to harm (NNH)), and



side effect risk information) to enable users of medicines and health care professionals to make sound decisions.

3. Include users of medicines as key stakeholders when developing medicines information.
4. Develop written medicines information (e.g. leaflets) that are understandable for patients of all health literacy levels. Any information that is developed should also be evaluated with anticipated end-users to ensure that it is suitable for its purpose.
5. Follow the local regulations on the marketing of medicinal products and acknowledge the difference between medicines information and promotional material(s)/advertising.
6. Utilise innovative ways and forms to distribute medicines information which is effective for users of medicines, as well as accessible to people who require special attention.

Member organisations:

1. Initiate strategic development of medicines information nationally.
2. Be actively involved if strategic development of medicines information is undertaken.
3. Work with allied health organisations to develop guidelines for development and use of medicines information materials.
4. Demonstrate the importance of medicines information to increase rational medicine use, medication safety, and adherence.
5. Develop strategies that encourage pharmacists and other health care professionals to provide high quality medicines information as well as take an active role in assisting patients to manage their medicines.
6. Motivate computer software developers to provide systems which give access to accurate and user-friendly medicines information that is customisable, and relevant to the specific patient and treatment.
7. Organise and promote campaigns on medicines information to highlight their role and importance.

Educational institutions involved in training health care professionals:

1. Include inter-professional courses on medicines information and critical analysis of websites in the curriculum.
2. Include skills on how to use medicines information databases and clinical decision making tools in daily practice in the curriculum.
3. Include the effective use of reliable medicines information sources in the curriculum.
4. Promote the development of exemplary medication counselling skills.



Pharmacists

1. Help patients and caregivers to obtain and critically analyse reliable health and medicines information to meet their individual needs. Special attention should be given to topics, such as:
 - Educating patients on how to use web-based healthcare information (including medicines information) and strongly encouraging them to speak to a pharmacist regarding information that they find online.
 - Informing patients who do not come into the pharmacy to receive their medicines.
 - Encouraging and assisting patients on how they can educate themselves.
 - Installing private areas for patient care in pharmacies.
 - Patient empowerment and patient responsibility for personal health.
2. Engage in efforts to produce and disseminate appropriate medicines information
3. Provide information in formats accessible to people that require special attention.
4. Provide information on both the harms and benefits of medicines.
5. Guide patients and/or caregivers to reliable information sources.
6. Use printed or electronic information to reinforce the spoken information provided to a patient.
7. Tailor medicines information to specific situations of the patient (e.g. first use of medication(s), repeated use, support to help better integrate medication regimen(s) into individual daily lifestyles and routines, correct use or application of medicines).
8. Discuss medicines information with patients, keeping two-way communication in mind.
9. Recognise the role of medicines information in relation to rational medicine use, medication safety and increased adherence.
10. Use reliable medicines information sources appropriately.
11. Demonstrate their medicines information expertise to other health care professionals and participate in inter-professional collaborative initiatives.

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[This Statement of Policy excludes direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines, because FIP is opposed to it.]

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This Statement replaces the following previous FIP Statements : International Pharmaceutical Federation. FIP Statement of Policy on Medicines Information for Patients. The Hague: FIP, 2008.

This Statement can be quoted by stating: : International Pharmaceutical Federation. XX The Hague: FIP, 2017. Available at: XXXXX

This Statement references the following FIP Statements and documents: : International Pharmaceutical Federation. Medicines information: Strategic development The Hague: FIP, 2017. Available at: <http://www.fip.org/files/fip/publications/2017-01-Medicines-information-strategic-development.pdf>