

On **20 May 2024** the General Pharmaceutical Council's Investigating Committee considered an allegation in relation to **Mr Sarfraz Patel, registration number: 2071654** and determined to issue the registrant concerned with a warning in relation to the conduct alleged.

The Committee concluded that the appropriate outcome in this case is a warning with the wording of:

Mr Patel is a registered pharmacist who, as the Responsible Pharmacist of an online pharmacy, dispensed and/or oversaw the dispensing of high-risk medications including controlled drugs and those liable to misuse, abuse and overuse. As a Responsible Pharmacist, it was Mr Patel's responsibility to ensure, through monitoring and review, that the prescribing systems in place at the online pharmacy were safe before the dispensing of high-risk medications could take place. It was also Mr Patel's responsibility to ensure that medications were dispensed in a safe and effective pharmacy system, under safe and effective processes.

Between June 2019 and August 2021, Mr Patel was dispensing/overseeing the dispensing of high-risk medicines to patients on the basis of an online questionnaire completed by the patient. There was no two-way consultation with the patient to clarify or verify the information provided in the questionnaire (where that was needed), little to no contact with the patients' GP or background clinical checks. Nor was there safety netting or follow up where monitoring may have been required. There is evidence to show that Mr Patel oversaw the dispensing of high-risk medications to several patients in circumstances where not only were those medicines unsuitable to be prescribed on the basis of an online questionnaire only, but also where they had already received multiple prescriptions from the same online pharmacy for those medicines. In addition, little or no scrutiny was being given to the risk of misuse or abuse or in relation to ongoing monitoring.

Mr Patel's dispensing at the online pharmacy equated to 46 full working days. During this time, he demonstrated a failure to meet the Standards for Pharmacy Professionals (May 2017). In not making the care of the individual his first priority, Mr Patel breached

Standard 1 which requires pharmacists to provide person-centred care. Standard 5 also requires a pharmacy professional to use their professional judgment and in doing so make the care of the person their first concern and act in their best interests.

In failing to ensure a patient's GP was involved in the care provided by both the prescriber and the pharmacist (where that was needed), Mr Patel has failed to work in partnership which is required under Standard 2 and communicate effectively with others involved in the care of the patient as required by Standard 3.

In failing to challenge poor practice and behaviours and in failing to raise a concern Mr Patel has breached Standard 8 that requires pharmacy professionals to speak up when they have concerns or when things go wrong.

Mr Patel is reminded that for any online pharmacy that he works at in the future, he must ensure that there are robust systems in place to safeguard patients and that they operate in a way that is in line with relevant national guidance including from the General Pharmaceutical Council, the General Medical Council and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. A warning is required to mark the seriousness of the issue and send a clear message to Mr Patel, other pharmacy professionals and the public, that dispensing in an online environment that relies solely on a patient questionnaire with few or no safeguards in place puts patients at risk, undermines public confidence in the profession and is a serious breach of the Standards for Pharmacy Professionals that they are expected to meet at all times. Any similar conduct will be likely to result in further regulatory action.

This warning will be published on the register and will be available for 12 months.