

On **20 May 2024** the General Pharmaceutical Council's Investigating Committee considered an allegation in relation to **Mrs Rabia Shaikh, registration number: 2068839** 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:

Mrs Shaikh is a registered pharmacist and independent prescriber who prescribed high-risk medications, including controlled drugs and those liable to misuse, abuse and overuse, via an online pharmacy. Between 25 October 2019 and 18 January 2020, Mrs Shaikh was prescribing 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 Mrs Shaikh prescribed 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.

Mrs Shaikh's prescribing at the online pharmacy spanned a three-month period and demonstrates a failure to meet the Standards for Pharmacy Professionals (May 2017).

In not making the care of the individual her first priority, Mrs Shaikh 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 have a two-way consultation with the patient and not involving their GP in the care provided (where either or both was needed) Ms Shaikh 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 Mrs Shaikh has breached Standard 8 that requires pharmacy professionals to speak up when they have concerns or when things go wrong.

Mrs Shaikh is reminded that, for any online pharmacies or online prescribing services that she works in the future, she 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 Mrs Shaikh, other registered pharmacy professionals and the public, that prescribing in an online environment that relies solely on a patient questionnaire with little to 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.