A NEW CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE PHARMACEUTICAL PROFESSION

An introduction by Ms. Mary Anne Ciappara BPharm, MPhil – Chairperson Ethics Subcommittee of the Pharmacy Council

The Pharmacy Council has rewritten the Code of Ethics for the Pharmaceutical Profession in response to developments in the Pharmaceutical Profession; the shift in the practice of the profession from being focused on medicines to becoming patient-centred; and patients’ rights and responsibilities.

The New Code sets out the Principles that are to guide and direct pharmacists, qualified persons and pharmacy technicians in the practice of the profession. These principles are intended to apply to all sectors of the profession.

The requirements of the new Code reflect key issues for the profession such as providing truthful, accurate and objective information; encouraging and empowering patients to be involved in decisions about their care and to manage their condition; communicating and collaborating with colleagues; and exercising professional judgement in the interests of patients and society.

The Code of Ethics is divided into 5 sections. These are:

1. Relationship with patients and society;
2. Responsibilities towards the profession;
3. Inter-and Intra-professional relationships;
4. Relationship with the regulatory and administrative authorities;
5. Promotion and advertising.

The subcommittee in charge of drafting a new Code of Ethics for the Pharmaceutical Profession addressed the matter in a transparent and inclusive manner and engaged the profession and the public throughout the process. The first draft of the Code was sent to the stakeholders, to all registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and to a number of patient organisations for their comments. Furthermore, the general public, through a press release was also informed about the draft code and asked to comment.

In November 2007, the Council agreed that meetings should be set up with the stakeholders to discuss the latest draft of the Code of Ethics. The draft Code was placed on the website of the Pharmacy Council and brought it to the attention of all registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. This was done to foster and encourage an open dialogue on such an important matter.

Throughout the process the responses, both from the consultations and individual members, were positive and contributed to shaping the new Code

In drafting the Code the subcommittee took into consideration:

FIP Statement of Professional Standards on Codes of Ethics for Pharmacists, 2004;
Oviedo Convention, Council of Europe;
The Charter of Fundamental Human Rights of the EU. Dec 2000;
Common Values of the Liberal Professions in the European Union, CEPLIS, July, 2007;
Ciappara MA. Pharmacist-patient Relationship: Ethical Issues. MPhil dis, 1999;
Code of Ethics, Pharmacy Council of New Zealand, 2004;
Code of ethics for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of
Great Britain, August, 2007;
Code of Professional Conduct, Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, 1998;
Ethical guidelines for Pharmacists, The Swedish Pharmaceutical Association, 1995;
Code of Ethics for Pharmacists, American Pharmaceutical Association, 1994;
Codice Deontologico, Federazione Ordini Farmacisti Italiani;
Code de Deontologie des Pharmaciens, Ordre National des Pharmaciens, 1995;
Code of Ethics, Alberta Pharmaceutical Association;
Code of Ethics of various professions in Malta;
Ethics and the Pharmaceutical Profession, Pharmacy Board, 1974;
Karta tad-Drittijiet u tar-Resposabililtajiet tal-Pazjent, St Luke’s Hospital, Sept 2001..