Pharmacy First Referrals – Top 10 Tips for General Practice Teams

1. Consider appointing a **PCARP Services Champion**. They can be a regular point of contact for local Pharmacies to gather feedback on how referrals are going – what's working well vs what could be improved.

2. **Tableau is a great source of information -** The PCARP Services Champion can pull monthly reports from the Pharmacy First Dashboard to monitor referral rates and compare this to other practices' data at a PCN, locality or Greater Manchester level. *Note: Data for the Pharmacy Contraception and Hypertension Case-Finding Service is not yet available but is currently being added*.
   Link to Tableau sign up – https://curator.gmtableau.nhs.uk/
   Link to Tableau guide - https://curator.gmtableau.nhs.uk/user-guide

3. **Set expectations when referring patients** – When referring, advise patients to **ring the Pharmacy in advance to confirm an appointment time** before arriving. Explain that they will be seeing a pharmacist who **can** provide a **POM if clinically appropriate** (if the patient's symptoms meet the requirements of the PGD). This provides the patient with background into what to expect from the consultation. Additionally, this will help Pharmacists to manage their workload and avoids multiple patients turning up at once, leading to longer waiting times/pressures.

4. **Ensure you refer formally (electronically) rather than signposting.** Benefits of electronic referrals include:
   - If a patient is electronically referred to Community Pharmacy for a Clinical Pathway consultation and **does not** meet the gateway criteria, the pharmacy should treat the patient through the minor illness pathway alternatively. This cannot happen if the patient is signposted.
   - Guarantees the patient a private consultation with the pharmacist in the consultation room, as opposed to an over-the-counter discussion with another member of the pharmacy team.
   - Guarantees the practice will be informed of the consultation outcome / notes regardless of whether the patient meets the gateway criteria.
   - Provides a clear audit trail, transferring clinical responsibility.
   - Support workload planning in pharmacies, reducing waiting times.

5. Exclusion criteria - You will see escalations back to the Practice where a Patient has been identified as part of the exclusion criteria. This reason may not be on your referral resource tables as these are simplified to the ***main points***. The Pharmacist will use the PGD to check if the patient meets the inclusion/exclusion criteria throughout the consultation to help inform the treatment outcome. For example, a diabetic patient referred for a UTI will be escalated back to the Practice, as this condition is part of the PGD exclusion criteria.

   Links for the clinical pathways / PGD's:
   https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/community-pharmacy-advanced-service-specification-nhs-pharmacy-first-service/

6. **Consider inviting your local pharmacy team into the practice.** This will allow triaging staff to ask questions, clarify referral processes, and better manage patient expectations.

7. **Follow up on escalations, where appropriate** – If a patient is escalated back to the practice and the consultation notes are unclear, **it may be helpful to reach out to the pharmacy directly to discuss with the pharmacist**. Open communication can enhance collaboration, clarify roles and expectations, and support mutual learning from referral outcomes.

8. **Referrals should be based on patient preference** – Referring to the patient's regular pharmacy can support continuity of care—for example, the pharmacist can follow up when the patient collects future prescriptions.

9. **Engaging with your PCN –** Actively participating in PCN discussions regarding Pharmacy First referrals helps to share practical tips, training opportunities, and identify common challenges. This collaborative approach can lead to smoother referrals and enhance service delivery.

10. **Identify any training needs of your triaging staff**. If you find additional support is needed, it is available through:
    - Online resources
        - NHS Futures - https://future.nhs.uk/
        - CPGM - https://greatermanchester.communitypharmacy.org.uk/
        - CPE - https://cpe.org.uk/
    - Speak to your locality leads for any advice:

Locality	Lead
Manchester	**Louise Gatley (Temporary)** louise@cpgm.org.uk
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    - Contact your CP / PCN Engagement Lead:

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