

Best Practice: Optimising pharmacy support for people with sight loss

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Accessible Information Standards (AIS)

- August 2016 – NHS England introduced the AIS
- Aim – information and communication needs of disabled patients are proactively addressed in all aspects on NHS healthcare including the dispensing of medicines.

Box 1: Five key steps required for organisations to comply with the NHS Accessible Information Standard^[8]

What does the accessible information standard tell organisations to do?

As part of the accessible information standard, organisations that provide NHS or adult social care must do five things:

1. Ask people if they have any information or communication needs, and find out how to meet their needs;
2. Record those needs clearly and in a set way;
3. Highlight or flag the person's file or notes so it is clear that they have information or communication needs and how to meet those needs;
4. Share information about people's information and communication needs with other providers of NHS and adult social care, when they have consent or permission to do so;
5. Take steps to ensure that people receive information that they can access and understand, and receive communication support if they need it.

Accessible Information Standards (AIS) - *continued*

- Outside of specialist centres awareness, knowledge and support literature for partially sighted people regarding safe medicines use is lacking.
- Implementation of and compliance with the AIS is variable and challenging.
- This could be because of little formal training about ophthalmic pharmacy in under and post graduate training.
- 1 in 5 > 75 year olds have uncorrected sight loss.
- It should be routine to confirm with all older patients weather they can read standard print. This would improve targeting AI to those who need it beyond the more obvious Braille/large font.

Practical guidance

- Other simple changes that can be made in the pharmacy to better support patients include:
 - Communication
 - Provision of information
 - Labelling
 - Patient Information Leaflets
 - Environment
- To address these issues and raise awareness of how pharmacy professionals can support blind and partially sighted patients and/or carers, MUS, RNIB and Moorfields Eye Hospital have developed 'top tips' guidance.

Communication

- Use an audio calling system if you want to speak to me as I might not be able to see a visual display.
- Allow me extra time to respond to your call when my prescription is ready.
- Even if I am accompanied by someone else, speak to me FIRST unless I request otherwise.
- Introduce yourself and tell me who you are, your role and what tasks you will be performing. I might not be able to identify a uniform or badge.

Provision of Information

- Please ask me what format I need information in so I can read medicine labels and leaflets. Commonly required formats include large print, Braille, audio CD or email.
- Offer me large font leaflets supplementary to the standard ones provided by the medicines manufacturer (see advice under labelling).
- When talking to me about use of my medicines, I may prefer to hold the medication container as I may find this easier to understand your instructions (for example, eye drop bottles or inhalers).
- Offer me a personalised dosing schedule chart in a format I can read.
- Offer to dictate a contact telephone number onto my smartphone or audio recorder, to obtain further advice as I may not be able to read the telephone number on the dispensing label.
- Make a record of my personalised requirements including accessible format needs on your patient record system.

Labelling

- Ask me if I use large print and if so, what font size I need to read the dispensing label. Make sure large font size is available, and that it is lower case, left aligned and in a clear colour contrast (for example, black on white).
- Offer to send me the information on the dispensing label by email if I cannot read large print or find email format more accessible.
- Please ask me if I need the information in braille format if I cannot use any of the above formats.

Patient Information Leaflets

In addition to ensuring key medicine label information is provided in an accessible format, offer me supplementary ways to identify my medicines, for example:

- Using different coloured highlighter pens for me to differentiate the different types of medicines.
- Using two rubber bands tied around the medicine container that I need to take twice a day, or a long rubber band with three knots in it could be tied around the medicine container that I need to take three times a day.
- Using paper clips, dispensing flags, sellotape 'flags', ribbons, string, different coloured/textured stickers.
- Provide me with important information (such as expiry date or special storage conditions) and offer to help me identify the medicine that requires this. I may wish to record a voice note on my phone, receive an email from you. In addition, for example, I may wish to mark the medication container with a marker pen or using a rubber band to identify fridge storage requirements.

Environment

- Bright colour contrasted lines on the floor can help me navigate through the Pharmacy.
- Use colour contrasted guide rails to help me navigate around the pharmacy and make sure the routes are not blocked by chairs or other obstacles.
- Position signs on doorways and at the Pharmacy counters (for example 'IN' and 'OUT' hatches) at eye level so I can view them up close.
- Tell me when you are looking at me and ready to talk because I may not be able to see you.
- Provide me assistance to seating whilst I wait for my prescription, if I need it.
- If I have a guide dog:
 - Don't play with my dog without asking first, because my dog is working.
 - Ask me if my guide dog needs a drink of water.

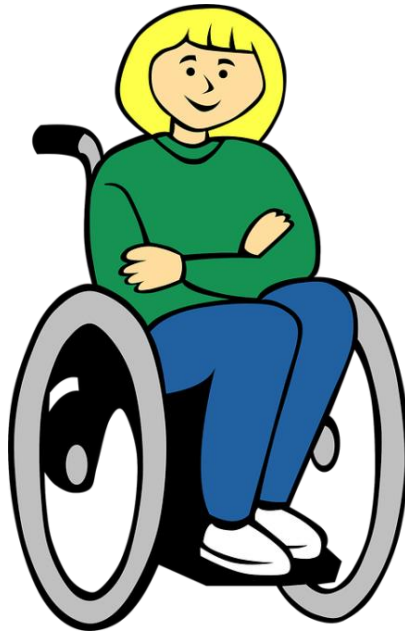
Other considerations

- Ask me if I need a non-child resistant cap for medicines containers as I may not be able to see the grooves and use it effectively.
- If my tablets need to be halved, consider offering to half them for me as I may not be able to use a tablet cutter.
- If you are supplying me a bottle of oral medicine to reconstitute at home, ask me if I am able to make it up at home. If I am able, ask what help I need to do this, for example, using a marker pen or a dispensing flag, to help me reconstitute the bottle at home. Offer me the opportunity to return at a later date to collect a reconstituted bottle.
- Offer me options of helpful medication compliance aids that might be useful to me, for example, easy grip bottle openers, aids for eye drops and inhalers.
- Consider offering me a Monitored Dosage System with Braille for my oral medication.

Summary

I am likely to need information in different ways to help me independently read and manage my medicines safely.

- Don't assume anything about how well I can see – ask me!
- Make me feel comfortable to discuss my needs with you.
- Ask me how I prefer the information to be given to me.



Further Information Links

- Top tips for pharmacy staff factsheet: <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Top-Tips-for-Pharmacy-Staff-vs-6-22nd-Aug-2017.pdf>
- Top tips for patients factsheet: <https://www.sps.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Top-Tips-for-visiting-your-Pharmacy-Vs-6-22-aug-2017.pdf>
- Comprehensive information on implementing the NHS Accessible Information Standard is at: www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/accessibleinfo/
- Health professionals with any queries about the above information can email: england.patientsincontrol@nhs.net
- NHS England also provides a telephone contact point for patients and members of the public with queries about the standard: 0300 311 22 33.
- For general advice and support if you are providing a service to someone who is blind or partially sighted, or if you have sight loss yourself, or know someone who is, Contact Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) for information and problem solving: Telephone helpline: 0303 123 9999, email: helpline@rnib.org.uk, website: www.rnib.org.uk