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Pharmacovigilance Association



UK Medicines Information

## **How to Use Pharmaceutical Industry Medical Information Services**

Medical Information Services in the Pharmaceutical Industry are a valuable resource for information about their products that is not otherwise freely available; e.g. unpublished data on stability, excipient details for licensed products, and information on usage and availability of unlicensed products.

The staff providing the service will have access to extensive information about their products. Companies are able to provide information to help with clinical decisions on how patients are going to be treated, but the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) Code of Practice does not permit them to provide medical advice or clinical interpretation of the information.

In addition some medical information departments may not have access to extended stability data and are only able to release 'off-label' information in response to specific enquiries.

The UKMi Quality and Risk Management group in conjunction with the Pharmaceutical Information and Pharmacovigilance Association (PIPA) have prepared a list of things to consider when MI services contact a pharmaceutical company Medical Information Department based on feedback from professionals working in the area.

### **Who to Contact**

- In most cases, Medical Information is the appropriate department for technical medication enquiries, and Customer Services for supply and availability enquiries.
- Ensure that you are contacting the correct company for the product that you are requesting information for. This is important for example, when a company has taken over another company's livery, or mergers have taken place.

### **Information About You**

- Introduce yourself and state where you are calling from (e.g. hospital site). Include your job title and/or that you are ringing from Medicines Information.
- Provide your contact details, so they can be recorded, with details of when you will be available to be contacted. If you will not be available at certain times, provide alternative contact details such as generic email and telephone details, or contact details of a colleague.

### **Information About Your Enquiry**

- Be clear what your question is and provide all background information that will help the company provide the best answer possible. Having a specific and clear question will help the person you are contacting give you a useful answer to your question.
- Let the Medical Information Department know the urgency of the enquiry and if the enquiry is for a specific patient to help them prioritise work.



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- Provide details such as indication, strength and formulation where appropriate.
- For enquiries associated with adverse events (AEs), product complaints and other safety information, enquiry handlers will request additional information. They need minimum information such as patient initials, age and gender, so have this information ready where possible. The Pharmacovigilance department may need to contact you for additional information, since this forms part of product surveillance.
- Advise where you have already looked (e.g. the SmPC) to avoid duplication of work.
- If you want the Medical Information Department to look in specific places, e.g. their own unpublished data on file, let them know when you make your enquiry.

### **Urgency and Deadlines**

- Be clear about when you need the answer. However, the company may need some time to get the information together so be prepared to compromise.
- Medical Information Departments will always prioritise enquiries for a specific patient, but some companies can take up to 10 working days to respond to complex enquiries. This may be due to the information not being held in the UK with some requests escalated to global headquarters.
- Requests for unpublished data on file may take longer to respond to as it will need internal review and approval.

### **The Response**

- If you need a written response, state this when you first make your enquiry to allow them to plan and provide this within the required timeframe. If you need an urgent response this is likely to be by phone.
- If you think it would help to clarify the answer provided, consider asking what resources have been used to compile the response.

### **Follow-up and Feedback**

- Obtain a reference number and ask who you are speaking to and their job title in case follow-up is required. However, some companies do not permit their employees to share their personal details.
- If you have constructive feedback following a good or poor interaction, contact the company and ask to speak to the Medical Information Manager. Feedback is always useful.



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