

PHARMACY EVOLUTION

Ever since the Middle Ages, there has been a distinction between the roles of the physician and herbalist, but the modern history of pharmacies as we know them today started around the mid-20th century. This timeline explores the evolution of the UK pharmacy in modern history and the key milestones that transformed the industry



1948

Health secretary Aneurin Bevan launched the National Health Service (NHS), giving people across the UK free prescriptions, though charges were introduced a few years later. The launch led to a big increase in dispensing volumes for community pharmacies.

1968

The Medicines Act of 1968 was brought in to govern the control of drugs following the off-label use of thalidomide. It defined three categories of medicines: prescription-only medicines (POM), pharmacy medicines (P) sold at the discretion of a pharmacist, and over-the-counter or general sales list medicines (GSL).



1981

Safeway, now a part of Morrisons, opened the UK's first supermarket pharmacy. There are currently more than 1,000 units across stores of the Big Four supermarkets.

1997

A four-year Master of Pharmacy course was launched to educate pharmacists for their extended roles in the NHS.



1999

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence or NICE was formed to reduce variation in the availability and quality of NHS treatments and care. The body created consistent guidelines around the techniques, equipment and supplies (including medicines) across the UK. Pharmacies had to ensure dissemination, implementation and audit of guidance on medicine use.



2006

Pharmacist independent prescribing was introduced, allowing pharmacists to prescribe for any condition within their clinical competence. However, by 2018 just 11 per cent of registrants to the General Pharmaceutical Council were independent prescribers.

11.6k

community pharmacies in England as of 2018
Office for National Statistics 2018

£9.2bn

total net ingredient cost of prescription items dispensed in England in 2017
NHS Digital 2018

1955

The Linstead Report detailed key functions for hospital pharmacies, such as dispensing, promoting economy in medicine usage, and instructing or advising on correct usage. The report contained many principles that still hold today.

1958

Due to concerns in hospitals about the safe use of drugs, hospital pharmacists' roles evolved to be focused on patient-centric care, leading to the concept of the clinical pharmacy. The Aitken Report in 1958 ruled that pharmacists should be responsible for the handling of all medicines within whole hospitals, not just the pharmacy department.



1999

The first internet pharmacy in the UK is launched, Pharmacy2U, allowing patients and customers to order prescriptions and medication online.



2015

Community pharmacists in England were granted access to use electronic health records where appropriate consent is arranged, in an attempt to improve patient care and appropriate treatment.



1971

The Noel Hall report identified the need for a proper career structure and training for pharmacists and staff. It also called for district and area pharmacists, charged with organising services across larger regions to produce economies of scale in terms of pharmaceutical services and production.

1980s

A number of prescription-only medicines began to switch to pharmacy medicines, such as ibuprofen, cough remedies and laxatives, which resulted in the widening of pharmacists' remits and improved access for patients. Since then, switches to P medicines have enabled pharmacies to take a more involved role in patient care, such as women's health and the ability to dispense emergency contraception.

2003

Supplementary prescribing for pharmacists was introduced to improve speed and efficiency of patient care and medication. Based on a voluntary partnership between doctor and pharmacist, and shared access to patients' medical records, pharmacies were able to implement an agreed patient-specific support plan to manage their condition.

99.5%

of pharmacies in England had gone live with electronic prescription services as of January 2019, compared with 93.7 per cent of GP practices
NHS Digital 2019

2019

The Europe-wide Falsified Medicine Directive came into force, meaning that pharmacies have to scan medicines before they are dispensed. Compliance with FMD requires community pharmacies to adopt new software and cloud-based repositories of data.

1.1bn

prescription items dispensed in England during 2017
NHS Digital 2018

