



Faculty of
Pharmaceutical Medicine



Pharmaceutical Medicine

A medical specialty advancing health through innovation

Pharmaceutical medicine is the medical specialty concerned with the research, development and monitoring of new medicines and other health interventions.

Pharmaceutical physicians can be involved at every stage of the development pipeline of all medicinal products, using their expertise to advance pioneering treatments, and help ensure they are safe and effective for patients.

The specialty is at the intersection of medicine, science, regulation and public health. It offers doctors the opportunity to contribute to medical progress at scale by helping shape the development, evaluation and appropriate use of treatments that may benefit patients around the world.

“It’s a challenging, varied, and rewarding career path for any clinician interested in bridging medicine, research, and strategy.”

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What is pharmaceutical medicine?

Pharmaceutical medicine focuses on the lifecycle of developing and delivering new treatments to improve patient health. It spans the discovery, development, evaluation, registration, monitoring and appropriate use of medicines and other therapeutic interventions.

Pharmaceutical physicians contribute medical leadership from early research through to post-approval monitoring, helping to ensure that medicines are developed ethically and used appropriately.

While traditionally associated with medicines and vaccines, the field now encompasses a much broader range of health interventions including advanced therapies, vaccines, medical devices, diagnostics, and digital or AI-enabled technologies that support healthcare innovation.



Pharmaceutical physicians may contribute to identifying unmet medical needs, designing and overseeing clinical research, interpreting clinical and safety data, supporting regulatory submissions and benefit-risk assessment, monitoring medicines after approval, and supporting the appropriate, evidence-based use of medicines in healthcare settings.



Why pharmaceutical medicine matters

Modern medicines and health technologies need medical oversight at every stage of development and use. Pharmaceutical physicians help ensure that innovation remains clinically relevant, evidence-based, ethically sound and focused on patient benefit and safety. In doing so, they support the development of treatments that address unmet needs, improve outcomes and reach patients through appropriate regulatory pathways.

As healthcare innovation becomes more complex, the importance of pharmaceutical medicine continues to grow. The specialty provides medical leadership across an evolving landscape, bringing together science, regulation and clinical application to help translate innovation into meaningful benefit for patients and populations.

For many doctors, a major attraction of the specialty is the chance to improve health on a wider scale. Rather than caring for one patient at a time, pharmaceutical physicians contribute to the development and safe use of treatments that can benefit large numbers of people.



“ Safety evaluation is not just about data, it’s about people.”

Types of roles

Pharmaceutical medicine offers a wide range of career pathways. Some doctors specialise deeply in one function; others move across disciplines over time. Common roles include:

Phase I Clinical Research

Early-phase trials in healthy volunteers or patients, assessing safety, tolerability and pharmacokinetics.

Medical Affairs

Generating, evaluating and communicating clinical and scientific information to support the safe and effective use of medicines. Roles include Medical Science Liaisons and Medical Advisers working mainly in the post-approval environment.

Pharmacovigilance & Drug Safety

Monitoring and managing the safety profile of products. This includes identifying adverse effects, assessing benefit-risk, and contributing to documents such as DSURs and RMPs. A strong clinical background is essential; industry experience can be advantageous.

Phase II / III Clinical Development

Patient-based trials evaluating efficacy and safety at scale. Physicians act as medical monitors and collaborate on protocol design, ethics submissions and regulatory filings during pivotal programmes.

Medical Assessor (Regulatory)

Based in agencies such as the MHRA, playing a key role in medicines licensing and post-marketing surveillance to help ensure medicines deliver their intended benefits safely for patients.

Independent Consultant

Many experienced pharmaceutical physicians advise independently across drug development and commercialisation, drawing on deep therapeutic-area or functional expertise built over the course of their careers.



“No two days are the same.”

Why choose pharmaceutical medicine?

A career in pharmaceutical medicine can be varied, challenging, exciting, fulfilling and rewarding. Whether your interests lie in drug discovery, medicines regulation, medical affairs, clinical development or safety science, there are many different roles and progression routes available.

Many doctors are drawn to the specialty by the opportunity to work at the forefront of translational medical progress, contribute to the development of new treatments, and apply clinical thinking in a broader strategic context.

The specialty offers intellectual variety, multidisciplinary teamwork, exposure to emerging science, international scope and the opportunity to improve health at population scale.

The field also offers flexibility and breadth. Some doctors develop as experts in a particular therapy area or function. Others move into leadership roles, work across international teams, or combine medical expertise with broader business, scientific or regulatory responsibilities.

Getting started

Doctors enter pharmaceutical medicine from a range of clinical and academic backgrounds. Strong medical training and experience are important foundations for the specialty. Doctors are generally advised to gain at least four years' post-qualification clinical experience before embarking on a career in pharmaceutical medicine.

Appointments from clinical and academic backgrounds are common, especially for therapeutic-area-specific roles. Some doctors move into the specialty after core training, while others complete specialty training first and then transfer their expertise into medicines development, medical affairs, safety or regulation. Consultants and academic doctors may also move into pharmaceutical medicine at a more senior level.

Additional qualifications can strengthen an application, depending on the role. Scientific or research credentials may be valuable, while commercial or business qualifications can support progression in medical affairs and leadership roles. Recognised postgraduate clinical qualifications also add weight to an application.

The specialty offers multiple entry points, and career development can continue in many directions as experience grows. Guidance is available for doctors moving into pharmaceutical medicine, looking for their first role or training, and thinking about long-term progression.



“ I wanted to bring together my academic background... with my clinical experience, in a role where I could stay connected to patient care and make a real impact as a clinician.”

About the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine

The Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine (FPM) is a professional membership organisation, registered charity and standard-setting body for the specialty in the UK. It is a Faculty of the three Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK and exists to advance the science and practice of pharmaceutical medicine.

FPM supports the specialty through education, training, examinations, revalidation support, professional standards, events, and membership. It is the professional home for physicians who advance health through medical innovation.

FPM supports:

Membership

Education

Specialty Training

Examinations

Revalidation

Events

Professional standards

Peer mentoring





Explore the specialty

Find out more about:

- pharmaceutical medicine
- careers in the specialty
- Pharmaceutical Medicine Specialty Training
- FPM membership, education and events

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