

Pharmaceutical medicine

Doctors working in pharmaceutical medicine develop, evaluate and market new medicines for the benefit of patients and the health of the community.

As a doctor in pharmaceutical medicine you'll be clinically trained but will no longer hold direct responsibility for patient care.

Pharmaceutical supplies

Life as a doctor in pharmaceutical medicine

Your experience and expertise will focus on the discovery, development and evaluation of new medicines and involve the registration, monitoring and medical aspects of marketing medicines.

You'll need a first-class understanding of legal and regulatory pharmaceutical frameworks and be able to apply ethical and professional codes to minimise risks to patients.

Most pharmaceutical medicine doctors work outside the NHS so collaboration is key to your role, which will involve working with research organisations, medical regulatory bodies and independent practitioners as well as the wider pharmaceutical industry.

The role has widened in recent years to cover all areas of pharmaceutical medicine including:

- drug candidate selection
- clinical research
- medical marketing
- drug safety and pharmacovigilance
- regulatory affairs
- medical and scientific affairs
- pharmacoeconomics
- societal and public health issues relating to pharmaceuticals in the wider context of healthcare delivery

How much can I earn?

You'll first earn a salary when you start your [foundation training](#) ^[1] after medical school. Find out details of current salary ranges for foundation and specialty training, [SAS doctors](#) ^[2] and

consultants on the [Pay for doctors](#) ^[3] page.

How about the benefits?

- make a difference
- flexible and part-time working
- high income early in your career
- work anywhere in the world
- excellent pension scheme
- good holiday entitlement
- NHS discounts in shops and restaurants

Must-have skills

- excellent communication skills to manage a wide range of relationships with colleagues, and patients and their families
- emotional resilience, a calm temperament and the ability to work well under pressure
- teamwork and the capacity to lead multidisciplinary teams
- problem-solving and diagnostic skills
- outstanding organisational ability and effective decision-making skills
- first-class time and resource management for the benefit of patients

In addition, doctors in pharmaceutical medicine need to demonstrate:

- expertise of acute and continuing clinical management and care
- wide prescribing and monitoring the effects of medicines
- clinical judgement, with evidence of capacity to prioritise clinical need and to maximise safety and minimise risk
- an understanding of the basic principles of scientific and clinical research methodologies and evidence-based medical practice
- critical thinking to understand and solve complex problems

Entry requirements

Your first step is medical school. Typically, you'll need excellent GCSEs and three A or A* passes at A level including chemistry for a five-year undergraduate degree in medicine. Many medical schools also ask for biology and others may require maths or physics.

If you already have a degree, you could study for a four-year postgraduate degree in medicine.

You'll need to pass an interview and admissions test. You'll be asked to show how you demonstrate the NHS values such as compassion and respect.

Some medical schools look to recruit a mix of students from different backgrounds and geographical areas, so your educational and economic background and family circumstances could be considered as part of your application.

What are my chances of starting a career as a doctor in pharmaceutical medicine?

Most pharmaceutical medicine roles for doctors are available outside the NHS, for example in research organisations, medical regulatory bodies, independent practitioners and the pharmaceutical industry.

How to become a doctor in pharmaceutical medicine

After medical school, you'll join the paid two-year [foundation programme](#) ^[4] where you'll work in six placements in different settings.

After your foundation programme, you can apply for paid [specialty training](#) ^[5] to become a doctor in pharmaceutical medicine, which will take a minimum of six years.

You may be able to train part time, for example for health reasons or if you have family or caring responsibilities.

Where a career as a doctor in pharmaceutical medicine can take you

You could:

- teach medical or postgraduate students as well as medical department colleagues and clinical trials teams in addition to company representatives of private firms
- specialise in laboratory-based or clinical research-based projects related to products, product classes or therapy areas
- conduct specialist research, for example as part of a PhD programme at university
- work outside medical departments in medico-legal, communications or economic disciplines in pharmaceutical companies or regulatory organisations

• Further information

These organisations have further information about being a doctor in pharmaceutical medicine, particularly as your career progresses. Take a look.

[Royal College of Physicians](#) ^[6]

[Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh](#) ^[7]

[Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow](#) ^[8]

[The Faculty of Pharmaceutical Medicine of RCPs of the UK](#) ^[9]

British Association of Pharmaceutical Physicians (BrAPP) [10]

The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI) [11]

And hear from people working as pharmaceutical doctors:

A day in the life of a pharmaceutical physician (BMJ) [12]

Dr Rebecca Curtis, pharmaceutical medical director (RCP) [13]

Other roles that may interest you

- Clinical pharmacology and therapeutics [14]
- Allergy [15]
- Dermatology [16]
- Sport and exercise medicine [17]

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/doctors/roles-doctors/medicine/pharmaceutical-medicine>

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