**Participant Information Sheet**

**Research project - Pharmacists' perceptions of ethical conflict and professional guidance in light of the revised General Pharmaceutical Council Standards of Conduct, Ethics and Performance**

Introduction

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) recently approved changes to its *Standards of Conduct, Ethics and Performance* (‘the *Standards’*) and its supporting *Guidance on Religion, Personal Values and Belief* (‘the *Guidance’*). The initial draft of the new *Guidance* contained no right to opt out where pharmacists’ personal beliefs conflict with elements of their professional roles, and significantly shifted the balance in favour of the interests of service-users. Following a challenge by the Christian Institute, the *Guidance* was revised to include the following wording: “Pharmacy professionals have the right to practise in line with their religion, personal values or beliefs as long as they act in accordance with equalities and human rights law and make sure that person-centred care is not compromised.” These changes in the *Guidance* take place while proposals are being made to change the law relating to abortion and assisted suicide/euthanasia in ways which would bring pharmacists into direct contact with these processes.

In this research we want to explore pharmacists’ views about:

1. the *Standards* and *Guidance*
2. the extent of their engagement with the consultation process leading to their creation (and their engagement with such processes more widely)
3. their experience of situations where their personal values and principles have come into conflict with their professional roles
4. their reflections on how they believe such conflicts ought to be resolved
5. and their views regarding appropriate levels of accommodation for individual conscience.

We aim to discover pharmacists’ own perceptions of whether the guidance as currently constituted offers appropriate protection both now and for the future. We envisage the research, which is funded by a Small Research Grant from the British Academy/Leverhulme, as a pilot study for a wider investigation of the authority of professional ethics guidance in healthcare.

About the interview

We will interview pharmacists working at various locations around the UK, exploring the issues set out above. The interview will last about an hour, and we will arrange to meet you at your workplace or somewhere else convenient for you, at a mutually-convenient time.

The information you provide will be used for research purposes only (in academic and practitioner publications and presentations) and your identity will be treated as confidential. Any identifying information will be stored securely in a password-protected file that only the two researchers will have access to. We would like to use anonymised direct quotes from your interview in publications and presentations, and you will not be named, or be identifiable in any way, in any publications or presentations.

With your consent, we will audio record the interviews and these will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who will sign a confidentiality agreement. Your identity will not be included in the transcript. The two researchers will work with this anonymous data only, and will not refer to your personal identifying information.

The audio-recordings will be transferred to an encrypted and secure site on Lancaster University servers, as soon as possible after the interview has finished. Once transferred, the recording will be deleted from the portable recording device. All data (electronic and hardcopy) will be held for a minimum of 10 years, as per Lancaster University requirements. All electronic data will be held on a password-protected, encrypted and secure site on Lancaster University servers, and no data will be stored on computers or laptops. Any data in hardcopy will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in one of the researcher’s offices on the relevant University campus, and will only be accessible by the researcher.

You may withdraw from this project at any time, by informing one of the researchers of your change of mind. You do not need to give a reason and there will be no penalties if you withdraw. If you withdraw up to two weeks after your interview, all data from and related to you will be deleted and/or destroyed, and will not be used in this project. If you withdraw after this time, your data may still be used as it may already have been anonymised, analysed and/or pooled with data from other participants, making it harder to remove.

With your consent, we would like to share your anonymous transcript with other researchers working in the field, by storing it in a data archive.

Research Team Contact Details:

*Principal Investigator*:Dr Mary Neal, The Law School, University of Strathclyde, Level 3, Lord Hope Building, 141 St James Road, Glasgow G4 0LT (mary.neal@strath.ac.uk)

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If you want to clarify anything about the research with someone at Strathclyde University other than Mary or Sara, please contact: Secretary to the University Ethics Committee, Research & Knowledge Exchange Services, University of Strathclyde, Graham Hills Building, 50 George Street, Glasgow, G1 1QE. Telephone: 0141 548 3707, Email: ethics@strath.ac.uk

This project has been granted ethical approval by the University of Strathclyde Ethics Committee.

The University of Strathclyde is registered with the Information Commissioner’s Office who implements the Data Protection Act 1998. All personal data on participants will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. Please ask for any clarification or further information.