

## Ethical decision-making tool for pharmacists:

# GUIDE framework

The PSA *Code of ethics*, with its domains of **CARE, INTEGRITY, COMPETENCY** and **COLLABORATION**, is grounded in the core ethical principles of healthcare<sup>1</sup>:

- beneficence (a duty to do good)
- non-maleficence (a duty to prevent harm)
- justice (a duty to treat people fairly)
- autonomy (a duty to respect individual choice).

The *Code of ethics* translates these foundational concepts into the specific context of pharmacy practice and provides clear obligations to guide pharmacists in applying ethical principles in their day-to-day work.

In practice, pharmacists are often faced with ethical dilemmas. Ethical dilemmas are situations where two or more core ethical principles conflict and no option is clearly right or free from potential harm. Ethical decision-making provides a structured approach to navigating these dilemmas. It involves systematically identifying the key issues, considering relevant ethical principles, reviewing legal and professional obligations, and evaluating the risks and benefits of available options. This process helps pharmacists move beyond instinctive responses to arrive at a reasonable and justifiable action plan that is in the best interests of the patient.

The GUIDE framework is an ethical decision-making tool that supports the application of the *Code of ethics* principles and obligation statements in practice and provides a structured way to document decisions.



### STEP 1

#### Gather information and understand the ethical problem

- What information do you have and what further information do you need to understand the situation and its context?
- What is the ethical dilemma?
- What harms are you concerned about and who do these harms affect?

### STEP 2

#### Understand the relevant law, professional standards and ethical principles

- Which PSA *Code of ethics* principles and obligation statements relate to your dilemma?
- What are your legal responsibilities in this case?
- What are your responsibilities under professional standards, codes and guidelines for pharmacists?

### STEP 3

#### Identify, assess, and select the most appropriate option

- What options do you have to choose from?
- What are the potential positive or negative outcomes of each of the options?
- Choose an option (seek advice if needed) and justify your choice.

### STEP 4

#### Develop and implement the action plan

- What do you need to put in place to mitigate potential unintended consequences?
- Communicate clearly and respectfully with those affected where relevant.
- Document the reasoning, decision, and actions taken as appropriate.

### STEP 5

#### Evaluate and prevent future issues

- What was the outcome of your action plan?
- Did your actions bring about unintended consequences?
- What measures could be implemented to ensure better preparedness and, if possible, minimise the risk of negative outcomes in the future?

Enter your considerations below and save for future reference.

**STEP 1**

**G**ather information and understand the ethical problem

**STEP 2**

**U**nderstand the relevant law, professional standards and ethical principles

**STEP 3**

**I**dentify, assess, and select the most appropriate option

**STEP 4**

**D**evelop and implement the action plan

**STEP 5**

**E**valuate and prevent future issues