



PHARMACY GUILD  
OF NEW ZEALAND



August 2024

Magazine for members of the  
Pharmacy Guild of New Zealand

# Contact

## Community pharmacy workforce survey demonstrates critical shortages

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The Guild recently (during April) surveyed pharmacy owners to better understand the true number of pharmacist, technician, and retail staff roles currently vacant in the community pharmacy sector.

Thank you to those members who completed the survey and shared their data with us. The survey aimed to collect real data that could be shared with Health New Zealand and included in the next Health Workforce Plan. This will ensure it accurately reflects the workforce pressures community pharmacy is experiencing, meaning our sector is acknowledged alongside others in the health sector.

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# Revolutionising stroke prevention: new tools for a healthier future

**Dr Bala Nair, Research Programme Manager for the National Institute for Stroke and Applied Neurosciences, Auckland University of Technology,** discusses two innovative digital health tools to enhance stroke prevention: the Stroke Riskometer™ app and the PreventS-MD™ software.



The Stroke Riskometer™ is a user-friendly app that helps individuals assess their stroke risk. By completing a short questionnaire, users receive their personal five and ten-year stroke risk,

their relative risk compared to someone their age and sex with no risk factors, and a list of their identified risk factors. This app empowers users to take control of their health by providing them with the knowledge and tools to manage and reduce their risk.

Designed for clinicians, PreventS-MD™ integrates with electronic patient management systems in outpatient clinics and hospitals. This software automatically pre-populates information on stroke risk factors, calculates an absolute and relative five-year stroke risk, and generates tailored recommendations for primary and secondary stroke prevention.

## The role of pharmacists

How frequently do people visit their pharmacy as opposed to their GP? It is likely people go to their local pharmacy more often. This might be to collect over-the-counter medicines or purchase beauty products or health supplements. A study published in 2020 revealed the median number of visits to community pharmacies is 85% greater than encounters with physicians.

More recently, examining a sample of 11.72 million Medicare beneficiaries, researchers from the University of North Carolina found visits to pharmacies are more frequent than those to qualified healthcare professionals by a factor of 1.7. Although this is US research, the trend is likely to be similar in New Zealand, and this could merit further exploration. Nonetheless, the growing shift towards value-based care has emphasised the importance of preventive care and chronic disease management services delivered by multidisciplinary healthcare teams, and community pharmacists are especially well-placed to provide these services due to their accessibility.

Pharmacies are ideally placed to raise stroke awareness and achieve better patient outcomes. Pharmacies can run stroke campaigns and potentially charge their customers



and patrons a small fee for on-the-spot blood pressure checks and follow-up stroke risk assessments through the app. Based on a customer's risk profile, a pharmacist could either refer them to their GP or offer supplements as a complementary stroke risk mitigation strategy alongside prescription medicine.

App users should be referred to their GP if their relative risk flagged by the app is higher or blood pressure is greater than recommended. Given potential confounding factors, such users are advised to visit their GP for medical examination before taking any new medicine (e.g., aspirin).

## Learn more and get involved

Visit our website ([nisan.aut.ac.nz](https://nisan.aut.ac.nz)) to access the Stroke Riskometer™ App and other stroke-related resources developed by Professor Valery Feigin and his team. Prof. Feigin, the 2022 winner of the New Zealand Prime Minister's Science Prize, is among the top 1% most cited scientists worldwide in stroke research.

The Stroke Riskometer is available on Apple App and Google Play stores. Information about Prevents-MD can be found at [bit.ly/stroke-riskometer](https://bit.ly/stroke-riskometer).

A poster has been included with this edition of *Contact* magazine for you to display in your pharmacy. *Together, let's make strides in stroke prevention and improve the health of our communities.*

Visit [nisan.aut.ac.nz/stroke-riskometer](https://nisan.aut.ac.nz/stroke-riskometer) or email [support@prevents-md.com](mailto:support@prevents-md.com) for more information.

# Strengthening pharmacy excellence: is it time for a QCPP-type system in New Zealand?

**Guild Senior Advisory Pharmacist Martin Lewis** weighs up the pros and cons of adopting a compliance system similar to Australia's.



In recent years, the evolving role of community pharmacists in New Zealand has presented exciting opportunities and exhausting challenges. However, the pressing need for a comprehensive quality

assurance programme is underscored by the limited literature quantifying metrics of harm and benefit and the palpable tension between clinical practice, public health, business, and community needs.

The level of pharmacy audit compliance has continued to fall, with only 40-50% of pharmacies achieving full audit compliance since 2021. This creates a precedent for New Zealand pharmacies to consider implementing a system akin to the Australian Quality Care Pharmacy Program (QCPP).

The Guild, following the guidelines produced by Medsafe, HNZ, Ministry of Health, Pharmacy Council, and others, is continually striving to provide our members with support and guidance to address the decline in audit compliance. We feel this is crucial to maintaining the public's trust in the services offered by licensed pharmacies. But are we just being the ambulance at the bottom of the hill?

## QCPP background

Operating in Australia for more than two decades, QCPP has been a cornerstone of the Australian community pharmacy landscape. Developed in 1997 by the Australian Guild, QCPP aims to ensure community pharmacies provide quality, safe, and consistent professional services, and customer care. More than 94% of community pharmacies in Australia are QCPP accredited, showcasing its widespread acceptance and positive impact.

QCPP accredits pharmacies against the Australian Standard AS 85000:2017, a quality management system specific to pharmacies, and failure to comply equals no contracts for funding of these services.

## Possible benefits for pharmacies in New Zealand

Implementing a QCPP-like system in New Zealand community pharmacy would produce benefits including:

### Professionalism and credibility

It provides tangible evidence of commitment to quality and safety standards, crucial for rebuilding trust with both the public and funders amid compliance challenges.



## Continuous improvement

The focus on meeting specific requirements for funded and non-funded payments aligns financial incentives with service excellence, motivating pharmacies to strive for compliance. This counteracts the current funding model's emphasis on quantity, not quality.

## Patient safety

Emphasises patient safety through compliance with standards and protocols, with less time and resources spent on endless audits and audit responses. Less work hours are spent on disciplinary processes, investigations, and actions.

## Regulatory compliance

Accreditation ensures alignment with regulatory standards, ensuring pharmacies adhere to industry best contemporary practices. Being compliant to an established set of criteria before funding contracts are granted, would reverse the current model, with pharmacies already adherent to the minimum requirements for payment as a prerequisite.

## The drawbacks

- Initial outlay and costs. Establishing a quality control system that is dependable and sustainable would obviously incur costs. The Australian model currently costs pharmacies between \$1,000 and \$2,000 per year. These costs could add a further financial burden to community pharmacies already under financial pressure in the short term.
- System-wide implementation. For this system to be effective in New Zealand, it needs to be universally accepted by the funders and other industry leaders and advocates. Piecemeal implementation is not a viable option.

Contact [newsletter@pgnz.org.nz](mailto:newsletter@pgnz.org.nz) for further reading.