

Why Completing the Information Governance Assessment is Important for Pharmacists

The Information Governance Toolkit is a means of assessing an organisation's compliance with Information Governance standards set by the Department of Health. The Information Governance Toolkit is written by and managed by the Connecting for Health Team, which is the area of the Department of Health that deals with all things information related!

The Information Governance Toolkit assessment should be completed by all organisations who use, handle, store or manage patient level data. This therefore includes:

- Acute hospitals
- Mental Health hospitals
- Primary Care Trusts
- Dentists
- Doctors (GPs)
- Opticians
- Pharmacists
- Private Healthcare Providers
- Support companies that provide services or software that require the use of patient level data

That's a lot of organisations!

By completing the Information Governance Toolkit, an organisation is demonstrating its compliance with important Information Governance standards. This is important for the Department of Health to see, for other healthcare organisations that work with an organisation to see, and importantly for patients and the wider public to see too.

In 2010/11, it was announced that Pharmacists for the first time **had to** demonstrate their compliance with the Information Governance standards through the use of the Information Governance Toolkit. Not only did they need to complete this assessment, but they also needed to be able to declare that they were at least a level 2 in terms of compliance with the assessment standards (each standard goes from level 0 to level 3, with level 3 requiring significant amounts of evidence before it is felt that the standard can be 'fully' signed off).

This was quite a challenge for Pharmacists, and still is. As the 31st March deadline for 2010/11 looms, any Pharmacists who haven't yet submitted their assessment need to hurry up and complete it, and those that have need to sit tight, waiting for the call to tell them that they have been chosen as an organisation that will be audited. In addition, Version 9 of the toolkit will be released in the spring of 2011, bringing with it new standards that will require demonstrable evidence of compliance.

It can seem like an almighty hassle to have to complete the assessment each year; and indeed the documentation creation and preparation that needs to be done in order to evidence each assessment is a thousand times worse than the mere completion of the assessment itself. However, the Information Governance Toolkit is an incredibly important tool for assessing how well an organisation is performing. It is also very important as a means of ensuring that Information Governance standards are being upheld throughout an organisation – as this not only brings peace of mind to patients and clients, but also to those individuals managing the service or company. Version 9 of the toolkit builds on this sense of security that is so important to the general public. It has a greater number of standards that force audit of processes and that seek customer feedback. It also nicely streamlines the Information Governance Standards seen in the Toolkit assessment with those seen in the Care Quality Commission registration process; bringing these two different auditing elements of healthcare together.