

Managing Disruptive Behaviours, Anti Vaccination Activity & Unauthorised Filming in Pharmacies

Guidance for Community Pharmacists



Background

Community pharmacies are increasingly targeted by:

- Disruptive, hostile and antagonistic behaviours
- Deliberate attempts to film staff without consent
- Misuse of pharmacy interactions on social media

These behaviours compromise staff safety, patient privacy, and professional integrity, requiring consistent and proactive management.



Key Actions for Pharmacy Teams

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1. Establish Clear Behavioural Expectations

- Require civil, respectful, non-confrontational behaviour
- Prohibit filming, recording, or surveillance devices
- Make compliance a condition of entry

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2. Display Clear Signage

- State conditions of entry and filming prohibitions
- Clarify that entering the premises does not constitute consent to be filmed

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3. Responding to Anti-Vaccination Activity or Filming

- Stay calm and professional
- Inform the individual of the policy breach
- Direct them to stop filming or leave the premises
- If they refuse: contact police; do not use physical force

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4. Managing Online Publication of Footage

- Where identifiable, contact the individual to request removal and deletion
- Report content via platform complaints processes (e.g., Facebook, YouTube)
- Seek professional and/or legal advice



Scenario 1: Unauthorised Recording of Vaccination Services

An individual records a vaccination consultation without consent and uploads the footage online, falsely claiming the pharmacist administered a "death dose" to children.

Risks: misinformation, reputational damage, staff distress, and public confusion despite appropriate clinical care.



Scenario 2: Deceptive Presentation and Filming

An individual reports a sensitive injury and is taken to a private consultation room. They secretly record the interaction and later publish it as a staged "prank."

Risks: privacy breaches, erosion of trust, reputational harm, and exposure of confidential discussions.



Purpose of This Guidance

Co-developed by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and PDL, this guidance helps pharmacists to:

- Manage anti-social and disruptive behaviours
- Prevent and respond to unauthorised filming within pharmacy premises
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of staff and patients
- Uphold and maintain professional practice standards



Protecting Staff



Protecting Patients



Protecting Professional Standards



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Frequently Asked Questions



Can we ask someone to leave the pharmacy?

Yes. Pharmacies are private premises and may refuse entry or withdraw permission for individuals to remain. Police should be contacted if a person refuses to leave.



What if someone is filming but not behaving aggressively?

Filming on its own can be disruptive or intimidating, and may breach the privacy and confidentiality of other patients. In these situations, staff may direct the individual to stop filming or to leave the premises.



Is filming inside the pharmacy unlawful?

Not always, recording laws vary across jurisdictions. While recording a consultation may be lawful in some circumstances, publishing or sharing recordings may be restricted by surveillance, privacy or other laws.



Can individuals film outside the pharmacy?

Filming in public spaces is generally permitted. However, behaviour that intimidates, obstructs access, or harasses staff or patients should be reported to police.



Can online footage be removed?

You can request removal. Platforms may take down content that breaches local law or community standards. Recording, privacy and publication laws differ across jurisdictions. This resource provides general risk management guidance and should not be relied upon as legal advice. Seek jurisdiction-specific advice where necessary.



Should staff physically intervene?

No. Physical intervention presents legal and safety risks. Staff should adhere to the Ahpra Shared Code of Conduct (3.2, 3.3, 5.3) and escalate to police when required.



Staff Safety and Professional Conduct

- Prioritise staff and patient safety above all else
- Avoid engaging in debate or confrontation
- Maintain a calm and professional approach
- Document all incidents and actions taken



Further Support

Pharmacy teams should refer to the Guild's detailed Anti-Vaccination Activity and Filming Guidance Resource, or seek assistance from:

- Pharmacy Guild of Australia
- Pharmaceutical Defence Limited (PDL)



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