

## Nottingham SPCR internship projects 2025

**Name & email supervisor(s):**

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External collaborators (Jackie Giltrow, Chair; Morag Punton, Policy Lead) from UK Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group (<https://pharmacysafety.org/>)

**Length and dates of internship:**

4 week placement during July - August 2025, if more than one intern, the internships should commence and finish at the same start point

**Host department:**

Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences, University of Nottingham

**How will the internship be conducted:**

- In person at the university
- Virtual/ from home
- Both are possible

**Title internship project:**

Identifying potentially inappropriate prescribing and dispensing of fentanyl containing medicines in primary care in the UK

**Summary of the internship project:** *(max 250 words, can include hyperlinks to further information)*

Fentanyl is an opioid analgesic that is approximately 100 to 150 times more potent than oral morphine. It is prescribed for stable persistent (long-term) cancer and non-cancer pains. There have been increasing concerns regarding harms associated with the prescribing of opioid medicines, including risks of falls and fractures, endocrine and immune effects, dependence and addiction, and overdose. The supply of fentanyl is controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Regulations with strict prescribing requirements and supply records.

The Community Pharmacy Patient Safety Group (CPPSG) have identified potential over-supply issues of fentanyl products through reports from pharmacists on the ground and also wider issues, such as accidental overdoses when multiple patches are used inappropriately, reported through "Prevention of Future Deaths" (Regulation 28) notices. As an initial step, the CPPSG produced a helpful video resource to support community pharmacists (<https://pharmacysafety.org/focus-on-fentanyl-video-resource/>).

Through a collaboration with CPPSG, project candidates will analyse data of fentanyl medicines supplied from over 100 pharmacies over a minimum of 12 months to describe the usage of fentanyl (compared to prescribing data where the prescription may or may not have been collected) and assess whether supplies match the prescribers' written instructions. It is hoped that this work will go on to inform policy and guideline development to help prescribers and

dispensers identify potentially inappropriate prescribing and supply of fentanyl containing medicines.

**Learning objectives:**

This study will give the intern(s):

- experience with handling and exploring a real-world comprehensive dispensing data (large data set, 100+ pharmacies with multiple years data)
- learning how to manipulate the data to yield appropriate descriptive statistics
- the opportunity to work with a very experienced research team in the areas of community pharmacy and pain management to generate hypotheses to inform future research

**Any further information:**

This project contains sufficient work for up to two interns, from any health-related discipline.