

PharMED

*Inter-disciplinary Pharmacy based research with a focus on
Medication use*

Welcome to the seventh issue of our newsletter! See what we've been up to and meet some new faces!

Introducing Ola: From Organisational Health to Pharmacy Research

Ola Amr recently completed her PhD in organisational health and individual well-being. She is a passionate researcher with a strong focus on realist methodologies. Her journey into research started with a keen interest in organisational topics such as mental health, learning, and development. While she didn't initially expect to pursue an academic career after her PhD, she found herself captivated by research.

Ola is now a realist researcher working on the INTEGRATE project at Aston Pharmacy School based in Birmingham. INTEGRATE is short for INdependentT prEscribinG in community phaRmAcY; whaT works for whom, why and in what circumstancEs. The project is led by Aston University in collaboration with the Universities of Oxford, Sunderland, Manchester, Health Education England and NHS Education for Scotland



Ola's Project: INTEGRATE – A Realist Review of Independent Prescribing in Community Pharmacy

The INTEGRATE project is an ambitious and timely research initiative funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR). The study explores independent prescribing (IP) in community pharmacies, aiming to answer a critical question: How does independent prescribing work (or not work), for whom, and under what circumstances?

This research comes at a pivotal time as new regulations in the UK will see the first cohort of pharmacy students graduating as independent prescribers (IPs) in 2025/2026. With this shift, there is an urgent need to understand how IP can be successfully implemented in community pharmacies to maximise its benefits for patients and healthcare systems alike. The study addresses critical gaps in understanding how to maximise the potential of IP in community pharmacy while identifying barriers to implementation.

Ola's project doesn't just focus on what works but digs deeper to uncover the mechanisms and contexts that enable or hinder the success of IP. By the end of the project, the team hopes to provide practical, evidence-based recommendations for pharmacists, policy makers, educators, and service users.

What is a Realist Review?

For those unfamiliar, a realist review is a unique approach to synthesising evidence. Unlike traditional reviews that focus solely on whether something works, a realist review examines how and why an intervention works, identifying the mechanisms behind its success or failure.

In the context of INTEGRATE, this means investigating the factors that influence the effectiveness of independent prescribing in community pharmacies, such as the setting, the people involved, and the conditions that enable success.

Stakeholder Engagement: A Collaborative Approach

Central to the INTEGRATE project is its emphasis on stakeholder engagement. The team is working closely with practitioners, educators, and members of the public (PPI) to ensure that the research is grounded in real-world insights.

Stakeholder engagement meetings are held every two months, providing a platform for discussion and input from diverse perspectives. These meetings ensure that the findings are not only academically rigorous but also practically relevant. Ola invites anyone interested in joining these meetings to reach out and get involved.

Progress So Far and Future Goals

Five months into the project, Ola and her team have already made significant strides. They have successfully completed the scoping phase, identifying key areas of focus for their realist review. Additionally, the project's protocol has been published (<https://openresearch.nihr.ac.uk/articles/4-72>), marking an important milestone in their journey.

Looking ahead, the team aims to synthesise their findings into actionable recommendations. These will help policy makers, pharmacists, and educators implement independent prescribing in ways that overcome barriers and maximise its potential.

GET INVOLVED!

If you're interested in learning more about the INTEGRATE project or participating in stakeholder engagement meetings, feel free to contact Ola: **o.abdelfatah@aston.ac.uk**
She would be delighted to connect and collaborate!

Meet Rumanveer Duley



Ruman, a community pharmacist, and former MPharm student here at Aston University has made the full-circle journey back to Aston as a PhD candidate after 9 years in community practice.

Under the supervision of Professor Ian Maidment, Dr Joseph Bush, Professor Derek Connolly and Dr Ahmad Shoaib, his PhD project, which is jointly funded by Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS trust (SWBH) and Aston University, aims to explore the potential role of community pharmacy in the prevention of cardiovascular disease in minority ethnic groups. It is planned that patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) will have a supporting part in guiding the project and thereby validating the emergent findings.

The first part of this three-part project will be a systematic review, for which the protocol is registered on PROSPERO available here: crd.york.ac.uk/PROSPERO/display_record.php?RecordID=579766.

Following on from this, a qualitative study will explore the perspectives of patients, family carers and healthcare staff through semi-structured interviews.

The final part will integrate the data from the systematic review and interviews on the potential role of community pharmacy in this area and from this, produce tailored guidance for minority ethnic groups and make recommendations to healthcare staff and policy makers.

Recent wins and updates for the PharMED team

APRIL 2024 - We submitted the RESOLVE realist review. It is currently under peer review. We are currently at the data analysis stage of the realist evaluation.

AUGUST 2024 - Nesrein Hamed, PhD candidate, was awarded a £2,000 postgraduate grant from The Harold and Marjorie Moss Charitable Trust to support her research on medicine optimisation for older adults from ethnic minorities in primary care

SEPTEMBER 2024 - Chief Investigator of RESOLVE (REalist Synthesis Of non-pharmacological interVEntions for antipsychotic-induced weight gain (RESOLVE) in people living with severe mental illness), Professor Ian Maidment, took a poster on RESOLVE to the FIP World Congress of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences in Capetown, South Africa

SEPTEMBER 2024 - Research Associate, Gurkiran Birdi, submitted the RESOLVE 2 project for publication. See protocol here: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/00469580241248130>

OCTOBER 2024 - Research Assistant, Hafsah Habib, presented the MEDiate study (<https://bit.ly/41bBJuW>) at the College of Mental Health Pharmacy conference

OCTOBER 2024 - Team wins the Aston Research Impact fund. Over the next few months, we will be collaborating with healthcare professionals and service users to develop a preventative pathway for antipsychotic induced weight gain (links with the RESOLVE research project: <https://bit.ly/3CYnde3>)

Other members of the PharMED Research team



CHIEF INVESTIGATOR
Professor Ian Maidment
Academic Clinical Pharmacist leading both MEDiate & RESOLVE



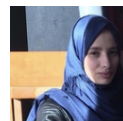
MEDIATE & RESOLVE RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
Dr Jo Howe
Chartered Psychologist with a background in healthcare research and realist methods



MEDIATE & RESOLVE RESEARCH ASSISTANT
Hafsah Habib
Pharmacy graduate currently focusing on how antipsychotic medications are discussed online



RESOLVE 2 RESEARCH ASSOCIATE
Dr Gurkiran Birdi
Healthcare researcher with a background in Health Psychology



PHD STUDENT
Nesrein Hamed
Pharmacist undertaking a PhD involving exploring medicines optimisation in ethnic minority elders

GET INVOLVED

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED



For a study, exploring medicine optimisation for older people from ethnic minority communities.

YOU ARE ELIGIBLE IF YOU ARE:

- An older adult (60 years or above) from a South Asian, Middle Eastern, or African-Caribbean background, managing five or more medications,
- OR
- Caring for someone who is.

The study will be an interview lasting no more than one hour. We want to understand the challenges older people face, the support carers provide, and the strategies practitioners use to help manage medications effectively and safely.

If you're interested in participating with us, please contact us via:
07405791717
160004825@aston.ac.uk

Scan this barcode for more about the study



Keep your eyes peeled for the next issue for updates on our work. For regular updates follow us on twitter at @PharMED_

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