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## Dr Falk/Guts UK Awards 2024

### PHARMACIST RECOGNITION PRIZE WINNER:

## MRS SONAL PATEL

#### PROJECT:

The establishment of a dedicated specialised pathway to optimise the management of patients diagnosed and treated for autoimmune hepatitis (AIH).



*Mrs Patel is a Specialist Hepatology Pharmacist at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London.*

#### Mrs Patel explains:

'The management of autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) encompasses the use of steroids and long-term immunosuppression to control hepatic inflammation. Close monitoring and careful titration of these medicines are required to strike a balance between achieving therapeutic benefit whilst minimising the risk of adverse effects.

'Prior to the initiation of dedicated pharmacist monitoring clinics for AIH treatment at our Trust, patients relied solely on hepatology consultant clinics for the initiation, titration, and ongoing monitoring of their treatment. However, the protracted waiting times for consultant appointments reduced the capacity to provide the consistent support needed by these patients to remain engaged in their treatment.

'I collaborated closely with the hepatology consultant team to redesign our treatment and monitoring pathway for patients with autoimmune hepatitis (AIH). This included developing frameworks for drug monitoring, creating tailored patient information leaflets and establishing pharmacist-led immunosuppressant monitoring clinics at the core of the service. By integrating these clinics into our existing pharmacy services, we were able to ensure consistent monitoring of high risk medication, whilst also supporting treatment adherence and overall patient experience. Implementing an email helpline for direct patient contact between clinic appointments has enabled a more flexible approach to patient care.

'We aimed to adapt to individual patient circumstances through the use of both virtual and face to face clinics, supporting home delivery

of medication and use of shared care protocols to support with local prescribing and medication monitoring. My data collection highlighted the variety of queries handled by our team and the level of support provided.

'I felt it was important to make pharmacist-led services central to this pathway. By focussing on optimising medication safety, efficacy and adherence, this was an opportunity to showcase our skillset and strengths, and a pertinent example of how pharmacists can directly support the wider multidisciplinary team (MDT) with patient care.

'It has been rewarding to see the impact of the pharmacy service on our patients. Several patients previously lost to follow up have since re-engaged with our services, and we have received positive feedback through patient experience forums.'

#### Mrs Patel's Lead, Dr Sreelakshmi Kotha, Consultant Hepatologist, St Guy's and St Thomas' (GSTT) Hospital comments:

'Sonal has been actively involved in setting up and running the pharmacist autoimmune hepatitis clinic at the GSTT alongside hepatology consultants. These weekly clinics significantly improved the quality of care provided to autoimmune hepatitis patients and reduced the pressures on consultant clinics. In particular the clinics have supported us to manage the cohort of patients who struggle with compliance to medications. It would be much more difficult to run the autoimmune hepatitis service without the availability of the pharmacy clinic.'

#### Mrs Patel states:

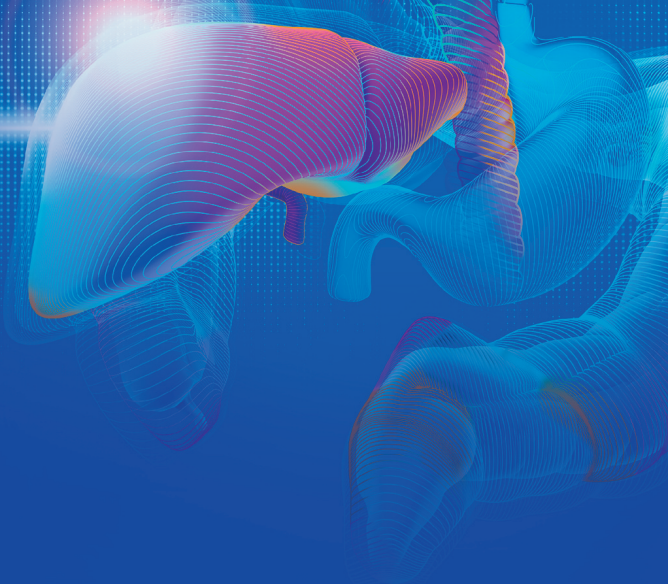
'This award is a lovely recognition of the impact pharmacists can have on patient outcomes, and I hope it will support in raising awareness of our skill set and role as key members of the multi-disciplinary team.'



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