

MHRA patient safety essay competition 2025

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The MHRA is inviting the next generation of doctors to explore how genetics could improve prescribing and patient safety in the UK.

Entries are now open for the MHRA patient safety essay competition 2025. Medical students and foundation doctors are invited to explore how genetic differences can affect responses to medicines, and how the MHRA Yellow Card scheme – the UK system for reporting suspected side effects – could better capture this information.

First prize is £500 plus an invitation to present your essay at a national meeting of the Commission on Human Medicines (CHM), the independent advisory body on medicine safety. Second and third prizes of £300 and £200 are also available. There will be separate awards for medical students and for foundation doctors, meaning six prizes in total.

Professor Anthony Harnden, MHRA Chair and professor of primary care at the University of Oxford, said:

“This first MHRA essay competition tackles an important question: how can genetics help us prescribe more safely and prevent harm? As you develop your clinical skills, you’re seeing firsthand how patients respond differently to the same treatments. My clinical career as a general practitioner taught me the importance of a personalised approach to medicines. I strongly encourage you to get involved – your ideas could genuinely shape how we monitor medicine safety across the country.”

The MHRA Patient Safety Essay Prize has now closed and winners have been selected in both categories.

Medical student winners

- First prize: Alasdair Purves, Cardiff University
- Second prize: Sheveen Wijesuriya, King’s College London
- Third prize: Pranjal Pandey, University of Cambridge

Foundation doctor winners

- First prize: Dr Naireen Asim (F1), Kent, Surrey and Sussex Deanery
- Second prize: Dr Ahmar Iftikhar Talib (F2), North West of England Deanery
- Third prize: Dr Samuel West (F2), Yorkshire and Humber Deanery

We would like to thank all entrants for their thoughtful and high-quality submissions, which highlighted the importance of genetics and reporting suspected side effects in improving patient safety across the UK.

Understanding the Yellow Card scheme

The Yellow Card scheme relies on healthcare professionals, patients, and carers to report suspected

side effects or incidents related to medicines, vaccines, and medical devices. These reports contribute to pharmacovigilance – the ongoing monitoring of medicines and medical devices in real-world use – helping to identify safety patterns and investigate unexpected reactions.

The MHRA's Yellow Card Biobank, in partnership with Genomics England, has begun linking these reports with genetic data to understand why certain patients experience severe reactions, such as pancreatitis with weight loss medicines or unexpected bleeding with anticoagulants.

What we're looking for

Your essay should explore how the MHRA Yellow Card scheme could better capture information about genetic factors in adverse drug reactions.

Entrants could reflect on real-world examples or clinical scenarios they have seen or studied, exploring how genetics might explain different drug responses, or proposing practical ways to improve reporting by healthcare professionals. Essays that are clear, evidence-based, and original will be highly valued, and outstanding submissions could influence thinking at a national level.

The competition is open to UK medical students in Years 3–5, including intercalated BSc students, and F1 and F2 doctors in UK Foundation Programme posts.

Submit an essay of maximum 2,000 words on the topic: "Using examples, discuss the potential role for genetics in improving the efficacy and safety of medicines for patients in the UK. Consider how the MHRA Yellow Card scheme could better capture pharmacogenomic related adverse reactions."

How to enter

Send your Word document to med.essay@mhra.gov.uk by 5pm GMT, Monday 15 December 2025.

Prizes for each category – medical students and foundation doctors – include £500 for first place, £300 for second, and £200 for third. The first prize winners will also present their essay at a national CHM meeting.

Notes to editors

1. Full terms and conditions are available at:
<https://yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/Patient-safety-essay-competition-2025>
2. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is responsible for regulating all medicines and medical devices in the UK by ensuring they work and are acceptably safe. All our work is underpinned by robust and fact-based judgements to ensure that the benefits justify any risks.
3. The MHRA is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care.
4. For media enquiries, please contact the newscentre@mhra.gov.uk, or call on 020 3080 7651.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mhra-patient-safety-essay-competition-2025>