

THE ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Transcript of the Public session of the Council meeting held on 14 February 2008

[NB: Decisions in square brackets and narrow type are taken from the unconfirmed minutes of Council and therefore are subject to amendment].

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Present

President	Mr H Patel
Vice-President	Mr M Astbury
Treasurer	Mr A Gush
Mr S Acres	Mr G Alexander
Mrs C Brown	Mr J Buisson
Mr David Carter	Mr S Churton
Dr B Curwain	Mrs D Drury
Dr P Entwistle	Mr J Gentle
Mr J Hanlon	Mrs S Hikins
Mrs L Jacobs	Mr J Jolley
Mr A Kershaw	Mrs S Kilby
Professor B Michell	Mrs L Morgan
Mr G Phillips	Ms J Ramsey
Ms M Saunders	Mr D Thomson

In attendance

Mr P Jones, Chairman Welsh Pharmacy Board and Dr RM Parr, Chairman, Scottish Pharmacy Board.

Mr J Holmes, Chief Executive & Registrar

PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Apologies for absence

Mr Hemant Patel, The President: We have apologies for absence from Stephen Denyer, Doug Simpson, Seema Agha, Margaret Allan and Ray Jobling.

2. Declaration of interests

Could you give any declarations of interest at the time of the matter concerned?

3. Batch 2 of the regulations - update

Mrs Christine Gray, Head of Corporate Governance: Council will recall at the last Council meeting in December we looked at the regulations and you asked us to seek Privy Council agreement to a one word change in the section relating to students, which we have done. They have agreed with that. We wanted to come back to you on the issue of the emeritus membership and fellowship. You will all be aware that at the time the Council considered the policy to inform the regulations on emeritus awards. We were anticipating continuing as an integrated regulator and professional body, and we were looking for a way to recognise the contribution that former fellows or former long-standing members of the Society had made. I think we would all acknowledge that what we are able to do in our current situation is not what we would want to be able to do for these people, and it is not what they would want to see either. We are in a situation where these awards would mean that someone was neither a member nor a pharmacist, nor able to use any post-nominal relating to their award. It is perhaps not surprising that some of the comments we have had back of this are saying, *Well, it's not really very much, is it?*

Now we are moving towards the development of the professional body, I think we have an opportunity to potentially send a much more positive message to these people to say that we acknowledge that while we are still a regulator we cannot do the sort of things we would like to do, but we can now be working to develop what you might call an alumni or emeritus cohort for the professional body, and perhaps involve some of these people in the development of those. That might be a more positive way forward than what we thought we could do before the de-merger was mooted. That is for you to consider.

The President: I will take any over-arching comments and go to (i) and (ii) separately. Council, are you happy with the general thrust of what they have been working on for us? Can we go to (i)? Is that agreed? **(Agreed)** (ii)? **(Agreed)**.

MR PHILLIPS: I know I always say this. I am entirely supporting the direction of travel. It is often not what we do, but how we communicate it that matters. Can we make sure we have a carefully considered communications plan for this and we take it with us in a way we have failed to do in the past?

The President: I agree. We need to communicate with those people who are currently members and receiving the Journal. I think we need to communicate with those members who walked away in anger, so your point is well made. We will see what we can do to make that happen.

Mr John Gentle: Can we look at the potential use of the type of *pharmacist (retired)*, because it seems to me if someone has been on the register 40, 50, 60 years or whatever, and they are 60, 70 or 80 and they retire from the register for whatever reason, the fact they can no longer call themselves a pharmacist when that is what they have trained for and been all their life, it seems to me this does not happen to doctors and it would not happen to lawyers. I know the use of *pharmacist* is a restricted title, but it seems to me that the innovation of the title *pharmacist (retired)* would go a long way to assuage some of the complaints that people like Bill Brookes have, who have written letters. Whilst this is up for grabs here, I think this might be an opportunity to look at this. I cannot see why the government would have serious problems with that.

The President: That is an interesting point. I have a slightly different point as well. If an individual is qualified as a pharmacist, what prevents that individual from writing *qualified pharmacist*?

Mrs Christine Gray: The Medicines Act prevents it. *Pharmacist* is a restricted title under the Medicines Act. It would require a change in the Medicines Act.

Professor Bob Michell: I am sure we had this explained to us decades ago, but why can you not have a non-practising section in the register, which is what the RCVS does? It is perfectly clear. It is a different chunk of the register. No-one can be confused.

Mr Graham Phillips: (Inaudible) ...practising section of the register.

Professor Bob Michell: Why can your retired members not use the letters?

Mrs Christine Gray: Because they are no longer on the register. If they are retired, they are no longer members.

Professor Bob Michell: Why does the Privy Council allow retired veterinary surgeons to remain members of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons and to be listed on a separate non-practising section?

The President: Bob, there are three categories: members of the Society, practising pharmacists and members who have moved to a non-practising register, and people who are qualified and worked as pharmacists who are no longer on either of the two registers.

Professor Bob Michell: What makes people angry is the loss of the right to use their letters, is it not?

The President: Yes.

Professor Bob Michell: And the argument is that somehow the Privy Council presumably think the public will be confused. Why are the public not confused about the veterinary register?

Mrs Christine Gray: I do not know anything about the veterinary register, I am afraid.

The President: We will look into it. There may be other ... **(Inaudible)** as well.

Mr Gerald Alexander: President, Chief Executive and Registrar, in your discussions with PRLOG next month, as we de-merge to become a professional body and the establishment of the GPhC takes place, I think it is pretty clear that the Medicines Act (or that element in the Medicines Act), when we look at the registered title of *pharmacist*, may need to be looked at. The GPhC would possibly be well advised to refer to registered pharmacists as a title. Therefore, other pharmacists who are not registered could refer to themselves as *pharmacists*. Therefore the post nominals would sit with the professional body, and you would be very proud to have those post nominals for the whole period of your existence, from the time you start practising until the time they put you in a box six feet under. But in truth, the registered title should be sitting in the Medicines Act. Therefore a registered pharmacist would be somebody who is actually practising, and a pharmacist would be somebody who has actually been a pharmacist and could still remain a pharmacist. But the title needs to be altered in the Medicines Act. I do not know what Christine would say about discussions. Is there any way that element within the Medicines Act could be altered with the Section 60 Order changes,?

The President: Council, in some ways what we are doing is reopening a debate which took place several years ago, because the Council spent an enormous amount of time going through all this. I would suggest for Council's information, Christine, could you circulate the relevant bits from that debate that took place several years ago to refresh everybody's memories? This is a new Council, but in the depository we have got scripts of what actually happened at that time. I am not in any way trying to minimise ideas or anything like that, but remind the Council that we have considered this over a period of time and we are now reopening the discussion.

Mr John Jolley: I have no wish to reopen this discussion. Events have changed. In the spirit of the new culture we have had outlined to us, can we not take this issue away and find a way of accommodating this change, because what is currently in place is unsatisfactory?

Professor Bob Michell: This is typically English. We are dancing on the head of a pin. The Americans would solve this in three minutes flat. I am a veterinary surgeon legally and undeniably. I also use MRCVS correctly and legally. If I write a prescription and Hemant thinks *Who is Bob Michell?* and looks me up in the register, he says, *Bob Michell is a MRCVS; he is veterinary surgeon, but I cannot dispense his prescription because he is on the non-practising section of the register.* I cannot even legally vaccinate my own dog. Where is the mystery? Where is the confusion? Who is inventing all this logical stupidity?

The President: We will note the comments, but I have to say in defence of our present and past Councils, the regulatory role tied our hands at the back. Although we tried very hard to include as many members as possible. It was in our interests to have as many pharmacists as members of the Society. Legal regulations meant we were not able to have everybody on board. We are now seeking ways to try and make sure that everybody who wishes to be a member of the Society and is properly trained to be a pharmacist is included. That is the bottom line message.

Mrs Christine Gray: We can look at what is possible for the future.

The President: Thank you for your support for (i) and (ii). Both are agreed.

4. Any other business

The President: I would like to go to AOB. None have been notified to me. Just before you go, Andrew [Gardner, Head of Registration], on behalf of the Council, I would like to thank you for all the contributions you have made to the Society's work, and in particular for the computer systems you have helped set up, which enables us to make sure that our registration process is effective and efficient. I think we have brought all that work within the Society from outside.

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This year, I think we have had the most efficient run in processing all the applications. All credit to you and our sincere thanks to you. We will break for lunch.

[Council **agreed** (i) to adjust section 12 of Batch 2 of the regulations to include only those provisions relating to honorary members and honorary fellows before submitting the regulations for Privy Council approval, (ii) to ask the Professional Body Taskforce to develop proposals for an alumni/ emeritus offering as appropriate as an integral part of the wider work towards a new professional body, in the light of the findings of the Clarke Inquiry, and (iii) to circulate the relevant documentation setting out the development of the policy on emeritus awards.]

The President closed the public business of the Council.