



**Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society**
of Great Britain

1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN

Tel: 020 7572 2335

Fax: 020 7572 2503

News release

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RPSGB LAUNCHES NEW REPORT AND AWARD ON MEDICINES SAFETY

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) today publishes a report calling for action on medicines safety and launches a new award which recognises significant achievement in improving medicines safety in Great Britain.

The report, *The Contribution of Pharmacy to Making Britain a Safer Place to Take Medicines*, calls for a five to 10 year action plan to be drawn up by pharmacists and other key healthcare providers to improve medicines safety. It also makes recommendations for future practice.

Patient safety is a key priority for the NHS. It has been estimated that preventable harm from medicines could cost more than £750 million each year in England alone (*NPSA 2007). Preventable harm includes the adverse effects of the medicines themselves and how they are used by healthcare professionals and patients.

The report details the need for more research into the prescribing, dispensing and administration of medicines, taking medicines at home and effective monitoring and review systems to provide a clear clinical evidence base for improving medicines safety. It also recommends there should be an integrated approach to safety that examines the context and systems in which errors occur rather than focusing on individual actions.

Professor Nick Barber, one of the report authors and RPSGB Council Member said:

“Medicines can offer great benefits, saving lives and improving patients’ ability to live full and active lives. However, we need to recognise that they can also have risks. If they are not taken correctly, their effectiveness can be hampered or they can be potentially harmful.

“Patients need help and guidance with medicine taking; they need to form partnerships with experts, to have access to clear, relevant information, and to be provided with the latest research on their medicines. Pharmacists are ideally placed to play a vital role in this process and to drive further progress on medicines safety.”

To reinforce its commitment to encouraging action on medicines safety, the RPSGB is also launching a new annual award, *Improving Medicines Safety*. The award will focus on specific improvements which have led to documented benefits for patients. Applications are welcome from individuals, groups or organisations from all healthcare sectors and settings.

Launching the award, Jeremy Holmes, RPSGB Chief Executive and Registrar said: “This award will highlight good practice and disseminate important innovations in medicines safety. It is part of our determination to promote the skills of the pharmacy profession and we hope that it will become the benchmark for excellence in the field.”

The closing date for entries is 2 April 2009 and the award will be presented at the British Pharmaceutical Conference in September 2009.

Ends

**For media enquiries please contact the
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain's Public Relations Unit
020 7572 2653**

Notes to editors

*National Patient Safety Agency: Safety in doses: medication safety incidents in the NHS: the fourth report of the patient safety observatory, 2007. www.npsa.nhs.uk/nrls/alerts-and-directives/directives-guidance/safety-in-doses

The Contribution of Pharmacy to Making Britain a Safer Place to Take Medicines is available at www.rpsgb.org or contact Karen Turnham at the RPSGB, 1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN, on 020 7572 2218.

Improving Medicines Safety

The award, *Improving Medicines Safety*, is open to non-pharmacists and will be judged by an independent panel with a stake in patient safety. The intervention should have been undertaken in the previous five years and can cover any part of the drug journey from prescribing, dispensing, administration, pharmacovigilance, commissioning services, storage to disposal.

The intervention should have been evaluated and demonstrate an important contribution to improving patient safety, saving lives or reducing harm, with the potential to be rolled out more widely. Each entry must be supported by two independent referees nominated by the applicant.

The judges for the award are as follows:

Dr Maureen Baker, National Clinical Lead for Safety, NHS Connecting for Health; Professor David Cousins, Head of Safe Medication Practice, National Patient Safety Agency; Kate Jones, Head of Safer Care, NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement; Professor Trevor Jones, Non-Executive Chairman ReNeuron; Professor Munir Pirmohamed, NHS Chair in Pharmacogenetics, Liverpool University; Gordon Thomson, Principal Clinical Pharmacist (Medicine and Cardiovascular), NHS Tayside; Dr Alan Wilson, Director of Service Development at the National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare, NHS Wales. For individual biographies of the judges, please contact the PR unit.

Application forms for the award can be found at www.rpsgb.org/societyfunctions/awards-scholarships/ or contact Karen Turnham at the RPSGB, 1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN, on 020 7572 2218.

British Pharmaceutical Conference

The British Pharmaceutical Conference (BPC) is an annual conference organised by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain and will take place from Sunday 6 September- Wednesday 9 September 2009 in Manchester. For more information visit www.bpc2009.org.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. It also regulates pharmacy technicians on a voluntary basis, which is expected to become statutory under anticipated legislation. The primary objectives of the RPSGB are to lead, regulate, develop and represent the profession of pharmacy. The RPSGB leads and supports the development of the profession within the context of the public benefit. This includes the advancement of science, practice, education and knowledge in pharmacy. In addition, it promotes the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums. Following the publication in 2007 of the Government White Paper *Trust, Assurance and Safety - The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century*, the RPSGB is working towards the demerger of its regulatory and professional roles. This will see the establishment of a new General Pharmaceutical Council and a new professional body for pharmacy in 2010. For further information visit: www.rpsgb.org.