

Restricted title – the facts

Current position in law

The use of the title "pharmacist" is restricted by the Medicines Act 1968. This legislation makes it a criminal offence for any person who is not on any part of the RPSGB's Register of Pharmacists to call him- or herself a pharmacist (or a pharmaceutical chemist, pharmacist, member of the Pharmaceutical Society, or Fellow of the Pharmaceutical Society). In other words, anyone on Parts 1 (practising), 2 (non-practising) and 3 (EEA visitors) of the Society's register is entitled to call themselves a pharmacist, and no-one else is allowed to. Current RPSGB guidance states that non-practising pharmacists, when using the title Pharmacist, should explain that they are not practising.

DH's proposals in the draft Pharmacy Order 2009

The current consultation by DH on the draft Pharmacy Order 2009 proposes that the GPhC will not maintain a non-practising register. The removal of the non-practising register, coupled to the continued maintenance of the restricted title "pharmacist" will, as the Pharmacy Order 2009 is currently written, result in some non-practising members being no longer able to call themselves pharmacists. **The RPSGB is contesting this proposal in its response (p.9).**

The DH has recently provided guidance that there will be no restriction on an individual who has left the register from referring to himself as a "former" or "retired" pharmacist or pharmacy technician. It states that the key is not to mislead the public about the currency of an individual's registration status, skills and knowledge. **The RPSGB agrees that those who have left the register should be able to call themselves "former" or "retired" pharmacists/pharmacy technicians.**

Art 8(2) of the draft Order states 'A person is not entitled to be entered in the Register as a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician if that person does not intend to practise in Great Britain, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man'. **The Society is contesting this proposal in its response (p.9).**

The RPSGB's response

In a Council meeting on Tuesday March 3, the Society discussed this issue as part of its response to the Department of Health consultation on the draft Pharmacy Order 2009, and agreed that:-

- The title "Pharmacist" should continue to be restricted to those suitably qualified and registered with the GPhC.
- The broader definition of "practising" proposed in the draft Order will encompass more members of the profession than at present, but not all will wish to be on the practising register.
- The GPhC should therefore consider maintaining a non-practising register.
- The GPhC should also allow those members of the profession who do not wish to be on either the practising or non-practising register to call themselves "retired" or "former" pharmacists.
- The future introduction of revalidation may provide an opportunity for further review of this issue.

This position adopted by the Council reflects the current situation that all those suitably qualified and registered with the regulatory body (on either a non-practising or a practising register) can legally call themselves "pharmacists".

It also attempts to address the concerns of many pharmacists about the loss of professional identity at the point when they leave the register – enabling them to call themselves "retired" or "former" pharmacists.