

ROYAL PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

Scottish Policy Consultation

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) has identified areas that could and should be targeted by policy makers to make better use of the profession's skills and which would make a difference to the health and well-being of the people of Scotland. We would be delighted if these points could be considered in your Party's policy discussions.

Pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professionals and see the greatest number of patients without an appointment on a daily basis. Pharmacists, located in almost every local community, are ideally placed to promote public health and facilitate a reduction in health inequalities.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

The RPSGB is the regulatory and professional body for all pharmacists in Great Britain. In Scotland there are more than 4,300 pharmacists working in the community, hospitals, education, research, and industry. Community pharmacists and their staff see around 600,000 people in a typical day across Scotland, more than any other health profession. It is our role to ensure that the public receives high quality pharmaceutical services including the highest standard of advice and support on the safe and effective use of medicines.

The Changing Face of the Society in Scotland

Following consultation with members and external stakeholders the Society has responded to calls to drive the pharmacy agenda more effectively for the benefit of the people of Scotland and is creating the Scottish Pharmacy Board of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, which will focus on the professional and leadership aspects of pharmacy in Scotland. The new Scottish Pharmacy Board is scheduled to be formed in January 2007.

The current situation

Since the Parliament's founding there have been many Bills, white papers and strategies that have impacted upon the profession and the delivery of care to the Scottish public, possibly the most direct of which has been the combination of the Scottish Health Plan *Our National Health: a plan for action, a plan for change*, the Scottish Executive's Pharmacy Strategy published in 2002, *The Right Medicine: A Strategy for Pharmaceutical Care in Scotland* and most recently the Scottish Executive's *Delivering for Health* published in November 2005.

Through implementing *The Right Medicine* pharmacists have taken on several new areas of service provision that have improved patient care and radically altered the perception of pharmacists as being purely dispensers of prescriptions to being providers of healthcare. These include taking on powers to prescribe, treating minor ailments, treating frail elderly people, people with mental health issues, those who need palliative care, and people with long-term conditions. Pharmacists are also working to promote public health, providing advice on healthy living, sexual health, smoking cessation, and harm reduction for substance misusers.

There has been increased recognition of the expertise of pharmacists; an acknowledgement that pharmacists can be utilised to improve the quality of care for the patient and alleviate pressure on other health care professionals. *Delivering for Health* illustrates this and outlines new and better ways of delivering healthcare services through community pharmacy. The document also outlines the four core elements of the new Pharmaceutical Care Services Contract, which it states will promote the improvement and use of pharmacies as 'walk-in healthy living centres'.

In addition, *Delivering for Health* states that prescribing by other health care professionals such as pharmacists has enabled NHSScotland to make better use of all members of the health care team and improve patients' access to the right level of care first time. To build on this further, the aim is to have a 50% increase in the number of non-medical prescribers by spring 2008, through the provision of dedicated education and training programmes.

The new Pharmaceutical Care Services Contract supports the aims of *The Right Medicine* and makes even better use of community pharmacists' skills and expertise to improve patient care. While there is much in the new contract to be welcomed we would urge policy makers to ensure that there continues to be the political will to exploit fully the opportunities to enable pharmacists to be an integral part of the multidisciplinary health team to improve the delivery of health care. In addition, there are still areas where we believe that NHSScotland could make better use of the profession's skills and which would make a difference to the health and well-being of the people of Scotland.

Priority areas

1. Pharmacists recognised as Public Health practitioners

Improving public health is a role carried out by pharmacists every day. The new community pharmacy contract formalises this function and will be an important vehicle for delivering public health services through community pharmacies. While current developments are to be welcomed, the Society would like to highlight the potential to build on this to maximise the pharmacists' role in improving the public health of the people of Scotland.

Smoking Cessation

The success of pharmacy-based smoking cessation services is well documented. Ease of access, a non-threatening environment, and availability of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) has encouraged many thousands of smokers in Scotland to quit smoking with consequential significant improvements in health. Banning smoking in enclosed public places has provided a further impetus for people thinking about quitting and it is important that everyone has opportunities to find the support they need.

The Society would like to see all NHS Boards providing a pharmacy-based smoking cessation service similar to the highly successful "Starting Fresh" scheme in Glasgow, which offers free nicotine patches and inhalers to those exempt from NHS prescription charges. Research shows the scheme, which runs for up to 12 weeks, can double the chance of smokers giving up for good. Since the start of the project in 2003, 4,845 people have achieved a four-week quit rate. The service is currently provided by 162 pharmacies in Glasgow.

Sexual Health

Pharmacists have always provided contraceptive medicines and devices but what is often overlooked is the contribution to health and lifestyle advice that pharmacists offer on a daily basis. Pharmacists are routinely involved in caring for people with sexual health needs and yet pharmacists can easily be excluded from the decision-making forum, at both local and Health Board level.

The Society would urge that this is rectified and that pharmacists are automatically involved in discussions relating to the public's sexual health needs. The Society would like to see an extension of services provided by pharmacists through the Scottish Executive's Sexual Health Strategy. We urge the amendment to the necessary regulations in order to allow the provision of free barrier contraceptives and appropriate lubricants from community pharmacies.

Substance Misuse

Scotland's network of community pharmacies provides an infrastructure which supports not only drug misusers themselves but wider public health strategies. These aim to minimise the harm that substance misuse leads to, both for the individual and for the community at large. Currently pharmacies give both medicine based and non-medicine based support to drug misusers as part of a package of care. Methadone forms only one part, albeit an important part, of that strategy. Pharmacists have a key role to play in the dispensing of methadone, the supervision of consumption and the offering of additional health advice.

The Society would like to see all NHS Boards in Scotland review their methadone administration policies in order to adopt best practice on issues such as supervision and working arrangements between prescribers, social workers and pharmacists.

2. Pharmacists as first line health care professionals

Linked closely to the role of public health practitioner, the Society would like to see pharmacists more widely used as first line health care professionals. This has been addressed to a certain extent through the Right Medicine and now through the core components of the new community pharmacy contract but there are areas where pharmacy can contribute even more to the health of the Scottish public.

Minor Ailments Scheme

The Minor Ailments Scheme forms one of the core components of the new contract and enables patients who are exempt from prescription charges to receive treatment for common illnesses free of charge from a community pharmacy without having to visit a GP.

The Society is keen that this successful scheme continues to be supported by the political community and that eligible patients are encouraged to register for the service. The impact of any reforms to the current exemptions from NHS prescription charges on the Minor Ailments Scheme must be carefully evaluated to ensure it is not undermined, which would place an unsustainable additional pressure on general medical services.

Prescribing

No other health professional knows more about medicines than a pharmacist. The Society would like to see the profession's considerable skills in pharmacology and therapeutics recognised not only by extension of supplementary prescribing but also through introduction of independent prescribing responsibilities, further utilising the extensive expertise in the use and administration of medicines. There are clear benefits to progressing from supplementary to independent prescribing such as the ease of access of community pharmacy, increased patient choice, making use of the specialist knowledge of the pharmacist, more efficient hospital discharge, etc.

The Society supports a robust education and training programme at both undergraduate and postgraduate level that allows all pharmacists to engage in prescribing. The Society would also want support to ensure that these newly acquired skills are fully utilised and that necessary support is secured from medical practitioners to act as mentors during training.

The Society would also like to promote a model that makes best use of the skills of all of the healthcare team, in which a doctor would diagnose and a pharmacist prescribe the most appropriate treatment and monitor its effectiveness. This would improve patient outcomes, more fully utilise the skills of both groups of professionals and improve service provision in areas such as chronic disease management, admission and discharge planning, and self care.

Out of hours services

Pharmacists already play an important role in out of hours care – with longer opening hours than GP surgeries and open access to advice. In addition, there is currently a National Patient Group Directive that enables community pharmacies to supply one cycle of a patient's repeat prescription. Following the introduction of the new GP contract there have been greater demands placed on pharmacy, particularly at weekends.

The Society would like pharmacy to be more closely involved with discussions surrounding service reorganisation, resources and staffing resulting from the impact of the GP contract on out of hours services. We ask that policy makers consider the full range of services the profession can offer.

Linking in with our views above on supplementary and independent prescribing, the Society would like to highlight the potential benefits if pharmacists could prescribe more than one cycle of a repeat prescription when other health professionals are unavailable if this is judged to be in the patient's best interests.

3. Pharmacists to be further integrated into the health care team

Health policy and planning

The Society and the pharmacy profession continue to support the goals of improving service delivery, to encourage a healthier Scottish population and a more efficient and responsive NHS Scotland.

The Society asks policy makers to recognise the profession as a core member of the integrated healthcare team when considering health policy and services at strategic and operational levels. It is essential that pharmacists are members of policy and planning groups at all levels and locations to ensure the people of Scotland derive maximum benefit from their professional knowledge and skills.

Hospital pharmacy

Pharmacists working in Scotland's hospitals play a vital role in the multi-disciplinary clinical team, advising other hospital staff and patients about medicines and their management. Pharmacists work collaboratively with doctors and nurses to ensure best practice on wards in order to promote the safe, appropriate and cost-effective use of medicines. Pharmacists are the medicines experts who use their specialist knowledge to improve the medication related care of the patients and to ensure a minimum of medication problems in the hospital setting.

The Society supports greater involvement of patients in the decision making processes regarding their medication, to provide greater understanding of treatment aims and any potential problems. Patients should feel empowered to discuss any concern relating to their medication.

4. Pharmacists supported to deliver new roles and responsibilities.

Access to medical records

Pharmacy's expanding contribution to patient care requires information exchange with other health professionals, including appropriate access to patients' medical records, in particular the patients' medicines record and diagnosis. The Society believes that healthcare delivery by pharmacists continues to be restricted without such access. If patients are to derive maximum benefit from the skills of pharmacists through supplementary and independent prescribing access to medical records (as is the case in hospital pharmacy) is imperative.

It is essential for achieving the full benefits of prescribing by pharmacists that they can read and contribute to relevant parts of patients' clinical records, and this must be enabled through the development of information systems and electronic care records.

IT Support for Pharmacy Practice

The ePharmacy Programme underpins much of the new community pharmacy contract in Scotland. Without a national, compatible system much of what pharmacists are to deliver through the new contract or indeed what they have the potential to deliver will not come to fruition. While it is appreciated that much work has been undertaken in this area, the Society would like to ensure that this momentum is continued and that the appropriate funding is in place to ensure the programme is delivered in full in a timely manner.

The Society supports the continued development of IT systems to support pharmacy practice in primary and secondary care, including improved communications between pharmacists and with other health and social care professionals.

We hope this document gives some indication of the key role pharmacy has to play across the health and social care continuum and the potential yet to be realised. From health promotion to health maintenance, to treating disease and rehabilitation, pharmacy is a true resource in public health.

The Society is keen to work with the political community and policy makers to maximise the contribution pharmacists can make to improve the health of the people of Scotland.

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