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The Pharmaceutical Journal
1 Lambeth High Street
London SE1 7JN

Telephone *editorial*, 020 7572 2420
advertising, 020 7735 9141
Fax *editorial*, 020 7572 2504
advertising, 020 7572 2505

E-mail *editorial*, editor@pharmj.org.uk
advertising, advertdept@rpsgb.org.uk
(see also "Notice-Board" page)

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SLOW START FOR DEPARTMENT'S SCHEMES

The announcement this week that only four pilot schemes have been approved for local pharmaceutical services, three in north west England and one in Northumberland (see p237), gives an impression not of volunteers stepping forward but of most other primary care trusts taking a step back.

Not that they can be blamed for this, given that the Department of Health set a tight timetable for the first wave of LPS pilots, while offering no financial incentives for PCTs to get involved.

Meanwhile, the Department is keen to press ahead with evaluating the three electronic transfer of prescription pilots, ahead of starting a national rollout next year. This is despite a slow start with two out of the three pilots, as we reveal in a news feature this week (see p242).

The Department of Health needs to take stock carefully of its pilot schemes and incorporate the successful parts into a properly thought out new national contract for community pharmacy. Too much is at stake to rush into something that has not been thoroughly tested in practice.

SEND A POSTCARD HOME

Continuing professional development will become a reality for 5,000 pharmacists within the next few months. Preregistration tutors, tutor managers, the 500 who took part in the Society's pilot and some 2,800 to 3,000 living in the north west of England will begin a journey that will, with little doubt, continue for the remainder of their professional lives (see p262). The journey will be punctuated on a regular basis by a review of their CPD portfolios and, if found to be satisfactory, with their status as pharmacists revalidated.

Those who have not yet engaged with the CPD process can only see the downside: the time and effort that will be involved. They do not appreciate that they are probably doing a great deal already. The main difference is that they do not record it: to continue the travelling metaphor, all they will have to do is to send a few postcards home (to Lambeth).

Members of Council have one important job that they can do in the next few weeks. They must offer their services as tour guides and all of them, not just those who are already selected for the process because of where they live or because they are tutors, should join the 5,000 on their journey.