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## GRASPING THE CPD NETTLE

Self-interest drives most people and, although pharmacists and other health professionals are able to point to the essential altruism of their work, they are ultimately no different from the rest of the population. So on one level it is not surprising that few pharmacists have engaged in the debate about the modernisation of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. The outcome seems likely to have little impact on most pharmacists in their day-to-day practice.

Continuing professional development is quite another matter and has implications for every person currently on the pharmaceutical register. The concern revolves round the CPD requirements for those people who do not spend any significant amount of time practising clinical pharmacy or whose work does not bring them into regular contact with patients. Academics and industrial pharmacists are one such group. Pharmacist members of the Society's staff are another. Pharmacists in Government, including the Medicines Control Agency, and in quangos like the National Patient Safety Agency make up a third group. Then there are the superintendent pharmacists of small multiples, the area and regional managers of large multiples, and those pharmacists who work in these organisations but may have developed new skills in, say, information technology who have neither patient contact nor anything to do with the supply process. And last, but by no means least, there is the army of locums who work infrequently. What CPD will all these pharmacists have to participate in to be able to stay on the register, and how relevant will it be for their professional work?

The suggestion has been put forward that some differentiation should be made between practising and non-practising registrants. This is a great idea but merely begs more questions: how will non-practising registrants be defined, how much CPD will they have to do, how easy will it be to shift between the two lists? And, of not inconsiderable interest, will non-practising pharmacists have lower fees to pay?

The Society and its Council are grappling with many difficult issues at the moment, but now that the profession is becoming more clued up about CPD (as they receive their individual videotapes about the Society's plans) they should turn their attention to these CPD matters as soon as possible. Few people really enjoy living with uncertainty, and if the Society and Council let it drift, large sectors of the profession will feel even more disenfranchised than they do at the moment. The powers that be need to be seen to be grasping the nettle.