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LICENSED TO PRACTISE

There may be lessons to learn from some proposals that the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons is putting forward at the moment for consultation with its members (p218), particularly with regard to the implications of mandatory continuing professional development for membership of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

One major issue of concern, as highlighted in the frequently asked questions published this week (p249), follows on from the discussion document published in last week's issue. It is that those pharmacists — whose jobs are pharmacy-related but which do not require them to be pharmacists — are to be discriminated against, compared with those whose professional lives are entirely devoid of any pharmacy content. The former have to undertake CPD to stay on the register; the others can, more or less, continue as now.

This is where the RCVS proposals may offer some food for thought. Like the Society, the RCVS is a professional/regulatory hybrid. As part of its consultation the RCVS is asking whether or not membership of the college should be separated from the licence to practise, with separate membership and registration fees.

Does this offer a solution for the Society, as well as recognise that it has a dual role?

Pharmacists who have to, or choose to, undertake mandatory CPD would hold a licence to practise as well as be members of the Society. The licence would enable them to be called, for example, "licensed pharmacists" which, the membership might agree, could confer additional rights (as yet undefined) as well as responsibilities. The remainder would still be called pharmacists and be members of the Society. It could be suggested, for example, that pharmacist members of the Council would have to be licensed pharmacists.

This might go some way to addressing the concerns of those pharmacists who want to be involved in Society activities but who, for a variety of reasons, do not think undertaking CPD assessed by the Society is really appropriate to their professional lives.

It is by no means a perfect solution, but it might help focus a few more minds before they complete the survey on mandatory CPD that is being distributed with this week's issue of *The Journal*. It may also stop hundreds of pharmacists fearing they are on the point of being disenfranchised because they will be forced to leave the register if they choose not to undertake CPD.