

Let your hook always be cast

Those pharmacists who have read the four articles we have now published about opportunities in the new general medical services contract should have a clearer idea of the way the Government's mind has been working. The emphasis is, explicitly and implicitly, on chronic disease management. And because so much of successful chronic disease management is medicine-based, there are opportunities for pharmacists to plug the gaps that GPs will not be able to fill themselves. Medication review is a service at the heart of chronic disease management and one which pharmacists are ideally placed to offer. The final article in the series (**Agenda for 2004**, p350) highlights a number of clinical areas

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schemes where pharmacists are paid sessional rates for medication review, something community pharmacists can just as easily provide. Those pharmacists with good negotiating skills are likely to be able to strike the best deals, because they need to convince GPs and PCOs that medication review is better conducted by a pharmacist than by a nurse (even though the latter may apparently be less costly).

The introduction of the new GMS contract offers other opportunities for pharmacists — particularly in some geographical areas, or for groups of patients whose care is not explicitly covered. Previously we have discussed the ways that pharmacists might be able to help in areas where GPs opt out of out-of-hours cover and decide not to opt back in (*PJ*, 31 January, p122). This week, we turn our attention to a group of people that may find themselves without access to good primary care: Britain's student population.

The GMS contract — with all that emphasis on chronic diseases — seems to have overlooked students' needs. By and large they are healthy, of course, but in order to ensure that they stay healthy as they grow older, their needs should not be underestimated. This week's **News feature** looks at students' attitudes to their health and what pharmacists can do to support them (p345). In areas where GPs seem to be thin on the ground or not meeting students' needs, there are several opportunities for pharmacists to consider: emergency contraception, advising them about smoking and helping them deal with sleepless nights are three that come quickly to mind.

While community pharmacists await their own new contract, there is nothing to stop them netting the opportunities presented to them by the GPs' one. As the Roman poet Ovid wrote: Let your hook always be cast; in the pool where you least expect it, there will be a fish.

where pharmacists can provide the appropriate support.

Community pharmacists would be mistaken to think that these opportunities will all be snapped up by primary care pharmacists directly employed by a primary care organisation, such as a primary care trust in England. In *Prescribing & Medicines Management* — which, starting this week, will now be published quarterly with *The Journal* as a central pull-out section — we describe a number of

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