

Numbers game

Although working pharmacists may never have had it so good, a great deal of planning has to be done to ensure future generations of pharmacists have the same opportunities. As this week's **Special feature** on recruitment reveals (p813), the career options for pharmacists are good at the moment. In addition to careers in community or hospital pharmacy (and in the pharmaceutical industry and other small sectors) the number of openings for pharmacists in primary care teams is likely to rise. More than that, the range of posts within each sector is limitless, with any combination of days and hours being available and with pharmacists always able to turn to locum agencies to match their requirements. There are few problems for aspiring and ambitious pharmacists: if they want a particular job, it can probably be created for them somewhere in Britain.

A bottleneck, that may well develop within a short space of time, is at the preregistration level. *The Journal* has already commented on the potential shortage of preregistration places if the interested parties do not respond to the challenge of providing additional places to the extra graduates emerging from new schools of pharmacy in the coming years (*PJ*, 1 May, p530). Concerns have been raised that already graduates are unable to find preregistration places and the matter was discussed at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's annual general meeting (*PJ*, 5 June, p722). Whether these are genuine shortages or simply a reflection of the preferences of preregistration trainees (who might choose a post in the leafy suburbs or a position within 10 miles of where they graduated, over the potentially more raw environment of the inner city) will emerge in time.

However, this week's **News feature** shows that the numbers game is more complicated. With cross-sector preregistration placements becoming mandatory in 2005/06 (subject to the Council's approval), the need for more posts must be addressed. One way of relieving the pressure on current training providers is to create new placements in a wider range of sectors, such as in primary care. They could offer split placements or shorter rotations combined with a hospital or community placement. Maybe the regulatory authorities, the major wholesalers and any other employer of pharmacists, such as locum agencies, should all offer preregistration places if they expect to benefit from employing pharmacists once they are registered.

Tell us what you think

Now that the new design for *The Journal* has been in place for six months, we would like to hear what you think about it. To help you, we have compiled a readership survey form that has been sent with this week's issue to every registered address in Britain. We would be grateful if you could spend a few minutes completing it. Pharmacists living further afield, or who do not receive a form, can complete it electronically at www.pjonline.com.

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