

End of a landmark year

In a hundred years' time, 2004 will be looked back on as one of the landmark years in the history of pharmacy. It was the year that community pharmacists in England, Wales and Scotland were offered new ways of working. It was the year that hospital pharmacists also found themselves working under new terms of service. It was the year that the Save Our Society group took members of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Council to the High Court. And after the tumult, lest we forget, it was also the year that the new Royal Charter was finally sealed and came into force. (In that context, we hope readers enjoy the cartoon we found in the pages of an issue of *The Pharmaceutical Journal* from 1933 — see p917.)

Furthermore, as this issue's news pages reveal, 2004 is not going out with a whimper: the Department of Health in England — but with input from the other health departments — has just issued a consultation document on skill mix (p871). At this stage it seems to offer few suggestions on the way forward; the document, instead, poses a series of questions for interested parties to consider. In reality, however, there are just two linked issues of importance — supervision and personal control. These are issues that have been simmering for over 15 years following the rejection of the then Council's advocacy of some relaxation of supervision at the special general meeting in April 1989 (*PJ*, 15 April 1989, p438).

Another announcement this week that has the potential to cause waves next year and beyond is the publication of the fifth report of the Shipman Inquiry (p874). Dame Janet Smith — who is leading the inquiry — savages the General Medical Council and takes a particularly dim view of the fact that so many members of the GMC are elected. She is happy that medical members are in the majority and does not want to see a higher proportion of lay members but she believes strongly that more doctors should be appointed. If the Government, through the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence, in due course makes similar demands on the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, we can expect the expression of more strong opinions in the letters pages of *The Journal*.

Season's greetings!



Our final issue of the year would not be complete without our traditional **Christmas miscellany** and this year's offering begins and ends with beards (p897 and p936). There are also some more serious articles, and quite a bit of history and travel. And there are three levels of competitions for you to enjoy: a crossword, a caption competition and a spot the difference — with prizes reflecting the degree of difficulty (pp916–8). We would like to wish all our readers the compliments of the season and look forward to serving you again in 2005.

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