

Take heart and hang in there!

As 2005 draws to a close, there cannot be a pharmacist in Britain who has not been subject to some change in the past 12 months. Few people enjoy change but, once it has happened and if they gain benefits from the new ways of working, most people will admit that things have improved. This week we look back at the year and focus on some of the significant changes (p769). New contracts for community pharmacists in England and Wales, and Agenda for Change for hospital pharmacists, must be high on the list of landmark events for practising pharmacists.

Although 2005 has been busy, it does not look as if the pace of change is set to slow down. Next year will see the introduction of the new community contract in Scotland and the development of other initiatives, such as independent prescribing, which are not yet a reality.

Arguably, the one major development absent from the pharmacy agenda this year is the consultation on the Section 60 Order. This has been promised by the Government for over a year, and it will cross the t's and dot the i's on regulation and provide the legal framework in which the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and its members can operate.

It seems, therefore, that, for the foreseeable future, pharmacists are going to continue to experience the disturbances associated with the introduction of new ideas and ways of working. It will be some time before they will be able to say that they appreciate the benefits. So, for those pharmacists who have been overwhelmed by unfolding events, *The Journal* encourages them to take heart and hang in there.

Better communications strategy needed

A survey carried out by *Which?* and published this week draws attention to the fact that patients and customers are confused when medicines are reclassified from prescription-only status to pharmacy status and are not sure whether their safety is a prime consideration (p767). As the Proprietary Association of Great Britain points out, the safeguards are already in place and enshrined in the Medicines Act 1968. What is missing is a proper communications strategy from the Government, explaining the part reclassification plays in its "choice" agenda. The way things stand it looks as if the emphasis is on improving pharmaceutical sales and reducing the burden on the NHS — and surely there is more to it than that.

Season's greetings!

As is customary in the final issue of the year, we carry our usual selection of Christmas miscellany items, which we hope readers will enjoy. We would like to wish all our readers and contributors a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

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