

Leadership and influence

Leadership and influence are loose themes for this week's issue. An evaluation of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's leadership pilot programme — which was launched in England last year — shows that the programme seems to have been successful. Just under 80 per cent of those questioned said that the programme had had a major impact on helping them develop and contribute to solving a local problem (p85).

Communicating with other health professionals and being able to integrate pharmacy into the NHS were highlighted as part of the success. It would be interesting to find out how many of the pharmacists involved in establishing new out-of-hours pharmaceutical services (**News feature** p71) would also cite communication and integration as key to their success.

Influencing others — whether they are other health professionals or patients — is the key to the development and success of new services throughout the NHS.

We report this week on the first health trainer — a pharmacy assistant — to work from a community pharmacy (**Vision for pharmacy** p76).

Health trainers are the new breed of health professional whose role was mooted in the Government's public health White Paper published in 2004. Health trainers are expected to support and motivate individuals to achieve the changes they want to make to improve their health.

Another important dimension to their role is to signpost individuals to other services both in the NHS and in the wider community. As the NHS becomes ever more complicated and begins to offer greater choices, the need for such patient advocates will not diminish.

Let's hear it for the pharmacist!

Everyone thrives on praise — and it sometimes comes from the unlikeliest of sources, but it is no less welcome for that. The July issue of *Reader's Digest* (which famously boasts that it is Britain's best-selling monthly) carries a feature entitled "Secrets of great doctors", which chimes with the themes outlined above.

The article gives advice on how to get the best out of the health service and includes 10 "gilt-edged tips from top doctors to help you navigate today's NHS". Coming in at number 6 is "Be friends with the pharmacist", contributed by George Rae, former chairman of the British Medical Association's prescribing subcommittee.

Some pharmacists may well find the tone irritating but, nevertheless, it is just the sort of publicity that the profession needs. It will help the message reach those people whose health can be improved if they develop a strong relationship with a pharmacist. Far better to have the support of *Reader's Digest* than be a footnote in a *BMJ* paper.

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