

Winning hearts and minds

One of this week's correspondents sounds an angry young man. Adam Sutherland berates the Society for failing to anticipate the Government's decision to separate its regulatory and professional activities, and believes that the Society should be disbanded and two royal colleges established in its place (p734).

There will be people who feel rather defensive about this letter and they may be tempted to dismiss it as an ill-considered attack that draws inaccurate conclusions, but everyone concerned about the future of the profession of pharmacy in general, and the Society in particular, should sit up and take note. Mr Sutherland is part of the future of pharmacy (he joined the Register five years ago); clearly he is passionate about pharmacy and wants an organisation to be created to support his endeavours. He does not think that the Society has done that in the past. The question is can it do that for him in the future?

Mr Sutherland may not have been aware of the encouragement that the Government gave to the Society, before publication of the "Trust, assurance and safety" White Paper, to retain its dual role — as well as expecting it to modernise its regulatory processes. And he may not appreciate that the additional regulatory burden, as well as the separation of the Society's functions that is now required by the White Paper, is the main reason why retention fees are likely to have to rise considerably next year and not because the members "have to pay for the Society's shortcomings".

Nevertheless, for the Society to have a secure future it will have to win the hearts and minds of Mr Sutherland and his peers and persuade them that its survival, in whatever form, is central to their future and interests.

Teach vets what pharmacists can offer

Last week we reported that some members of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Council had advocated that pharmacy education and training needs to have a greater focus on veterinary pharmacy (*PJ*, 16 June, p716). Veterinary pharmacy features again this week. In a debate held during the recent Veterinary Pharmacists Group conference (p741), the president of the British Veterinary Association declared that pharmacists are not an essential part of the future animal health team. And in his speech the VPG chairman bemoaned how veterinary surgeons tend to be dismissive of pharmacists' competence.

Although the current focus on veterinary issues in pharmacy education and training may not be strong, at least a focus exists, and it is acknowledged that the competencies required to handle animal medicines have yet to be developed by most pharmacists. But this works both ways: what is also needed is a focus — in veterinary education and training — on what pharmacists can offer in terms of benefits to animal health. Then vets' negative views of pharmacy might be banished and pharmacist-vet partnership working, as envisaged during the VPG conference, could become a reality.

Editor and editorial director
Olivia Timbs
Tel 020 7572 2414

Deputy editor
Andrew Haynes, *MRPharmS*
The Society section
Tel 020 7572 2421

Managing editor
Graeme Smith, *MRPharmS*
Letters and other contributions
Tel 020 7572 2426

Assistant editor
Michael Thompson
Editor — PJ Online
Tel 020 7572 2428

News editor
Harriet Adcock, *MRPharmS*
Tel 020 7572 2415

Senior news and feature writer
Dawn Connelly, *MRPharmS*
Tel 020 7572 2427

News and feature writers
Tom Moberly
Tel 020 7572 2417
Matthew Wright, *MRPharmS*
Tel 020 7572 2430

Senior contributions editor
Lin-Nam Wang, *MRPharmS*
Continuing professional development
Tel 020 7572 2413

Contributions editor
Gemma Cleveland
Reviews
Tel 020 7572 2416

Website controller — pjonline.com
Gowan Clews
Tel 020 7572 2418

Personal assistant to the editor
Emma Kerby-Evans
Tel 020 7572 2414

Administrative assistant
Pauline Heslop
Branch meetings, copyright, permissions
Tel 020 7572 2422

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