

# A new breed of pharmacy

**H**ow do pharmacists break into pharmacy ownership? The traditional route of buying an independent pharmacy from someone on the point of retirement has become increasingly difficult. Prices are so high that only the multiples are prepared, or can afford, to buy them. So, as a result, some enterprising pharmacists have decided to go down the 100-hour route, a route which was primarily thought to appeal to supermarkets as a way to establish a pharmacy on their out-of-town sites without — so the argument went — destabilising the pharmacy network.

Whether or not this new breed of pharmacy will survive the current Government review will be revealed when the White Paper on pharmaceutical contractual arrangements is published later in the year. Meanwhile, those pharmacists who have broken into pharmacy ownership this way have benefited. Primary care trusts are obliged to support them by funding the essential and advanced services they provide, and the long hours mean that they can develop new clinical services.

However, there is evidence that some existing pharmacies are feeling the squeeze — although whether that is a direct result of competition from the new breed of pharmacy or because they have been unable to rise to the challenges of the new pharmacy contract as quickly as their competitors is difficult to unravel.

Most importantly, pharmacists who believe that they have a great deal to offer their local communities by providing innovative services in an entrepreneurial environment, and who believe their talents would not be fully recognised if they remained in a larger company's employment, must see a way for their talents to be rewarded.

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## Beware of illegal websites selling medicines

**W**orld-wide there are thousands of websites selling medicines. Most surprisingly, according to a report from the US, nearly 20 per cent of them are hosted from the UK. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society is set to introduce a system where bona fide virtual pharmacies must display a logo to reassure the public that they are registered by the Society and subject to the same level of inspection that physical premises are.

The trouble for the unsuspecting public, however, is that illicit websites offering medicines for sale will continue to operate without any controls and be more likely to sell products of dubious origin. Moreover, millions of people worldwide will continue to buy products from these virtual outlets because they do not involve a consultation with a doctor (virtual or not) or the issuing of a prescription.

Educating the public about the dangers of making purchases other than from legitimate pharmacies, including websites they operate, is the only way that they can ultimately be protected.

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