

# A rock and a hard place

Community pharmacy contractors — in England and Wales at least — are caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, they face the recovery of £400m by the end of the financial year due to realignment of Category M prices (p371) and, on the other, the fact that few clinical services have been commissioned as a result of the new community pharmacy contract, introduced in April 2005. This has resulted in most contractors believing that they are less well off (*PJ*, 15 September, p280).

The Government no doubt will argue that the recovery is just a question of levelling the financial playing field. The principle is not new, although the sums involved are larger than before, and it highlights the fact that contractors can no longer rely on dispensing as a consistent source of income.

Theoretically, they should be able to turn to the contract to see how they can maximise their income from advanced and enhanced services. The problem is that these enhanced services are simply not being commissioned and new, nationally funded advanced services have not been developed.

Nevertheless, many pharmacists have invested heavily in their premises and staff in anticipation of being able to deliver new services, but they will become increasingly reluctant to do so, if they continue to experience fluctuations in income.

A White Paper is expected this autumn on the provision of health services. It is hoped that it will encourage primary care trusts to commission services from pharmacists and stimulate greater collaboration between GPs and pharmacists. Both are critical to the delivery of improved services for patients.

But, and it is a big but, a general election may be announced imminently. All the major parties have suggested that pharmacy would be given a higher profile so, in one sense, it should not matter who is in power — although an election will lead to delays.

Until something changes, contractors are marooned.

## Where will pharmacy be in 2020?

Last week *The Journal* pointed out that the series of articles underpinning the Pharmacy 2020 initiative was coming to an end. This week, it is the turn of members of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and others interested in the development of pharmacy to outline their ideas. In the centre of this issue, there is a four-page document, in which you are invited to record the ways you think pharmacy should develop. Bearing in mind the success of the Pharmacy in a New Age initiative, which took place nearly a decade ago, the organisers of Pharmacy 2020 have high hopes that many will respond this time. The consultation is open until just after Christmas.

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