

A cat among the pigeons

It seems that the rumours are true: some pharmacists in Scotland are thinking about creating a new professional body — despite comments in last week's issue of *The Journal* that the future professional body for pharmacy should be one GB (or even UK) organisation, albeit with a federal structure (*PJ*, 19 January p43). After that issue had gone to press, we learnt that a group of leading pharmacists had attended a meeting in

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Glasgow, organised by the two schools of pharmacy in Scotland. To the surprise of some of those present, proposals for the formation of a new collegiate pharmacy body were discussed (p71).

Details are patchy and none of those involved was able to comment on the record this week. However, some people who were at the meeting told *The Journal* that the collegiate body is being set up to promote research, particularly practice-based research, and that it will operate in addition to any professional pharmacy body formed from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

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Scotland's professional pharmacy body, in direct competition with the Society, although this has been denied by others who were there.

Also causing confusion is how the collegiate body will be funded. Some of those at the meeting indicated that the Scottish Government is to provide financial support. If this is true, it will raise serious concerns over its independence. For how could the collegiate body disagree with a Government position if its very survival came down to Government money?

There are other questions to be answered as well. Why have the organisers chosen this moment to put a cat among the pigeons? Surely it would have made sense to wait until pharmacists and pharmacy bodies all over Britain have had a chance to consider — probably towards the end of this year — whether the GB-wide organisation that is likely to emerge from the Clarke Inquiry (p71) will provide pharmacists with the support that they want. Perhaps the organisers of last week's meeting would even find that their own hopes and expectations would be met by it. If not, then that would be the time to create an alternative body.

The Journal hopes that all those floating the idea of the collegiate body, especially with the question marks over how it will be funded and to whom it may be accountable, will produce some answers soon.

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