

# Business as usual

**A**lthough the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has currently to focus much of its attention on the establishment of the General Pharmaceutical Council and the emergence of a new professional body (see "Plans for new professional body pick up pace" distributed with this issue of *The Journal*), there are issues of evolving pharmacy practice that it must continue to consider.

Consultations were due to start this week on three different aspects of the handling of medicines that are likely to lead to changes in professional guidance (p558). The first concerns blister and foil packs: the Society wants to know whether members believe it would be appropriate to relax the guidance on de-blistering products so that monitored dosage systems can be filled in good time; and to accommodate robotic dispensing.

Less apparently pressing is how pharmacists might cope with shortages of medicines in times of a national emergency; an influenza pandemic is the usual example given. Should pharmacists be able to supply medicines after their expiry dates — particularly products that are known not to degrade rapidly? And, in a related suggestion, should pharmacists be able to dispense returned medicines if they are still in their original packaging and do not appear to be damaged in any way?

In many ways these seem to be no more than common sense and, certainly in the case of de-blistering medicines, a long overdue development. Pharmacists are invited to let the Society know their views on these issues by logging on to the website ([www.rpsgb.org](http://www.rpsgb.org)) and going to the consultation section. The consultations end on 20 June.

## Don't say "don't" to patients

**H**ow do pharmacists persuade patients that a treatment is of benefit, or that a change in lifestyle will pay dividends for their health in the long term? The answers may already exist and can be found not in the normal world of healthcare, but in the hands of marketing professionals who have developed techniques that are proven to influence people's opinions about a wide range of products and services.

A meeting organised last week by the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust invited marketing professionals to talk about the use of their techniques in public health (p573). They managed to make it all sound easy. One of the messages to emerge is that if you want to persuade people to change, do not focus on the activity that you want them to avoid. Photographs of the effects of 30 years' smoking on skin are more likely to make an impact than a heap of cigarette ends in an ashtray, however disgusting that image might be to a non-smoker.

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