

# Time for reflection

This year's election figures — for the Council of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and two of the three national pharmacy boards — can only be described as sobering. Despite great efforts on behalf of the Society this year to persuade members to vote, the turnout for the Council election was about 16 per cent — down from just over 20 per cent when the last election took place in 2006 (p583).

There are a number of reasons that can be put forward to explain this low figure. Here are a few suggestions: this year's elections took place while an independent survey was being conducted on behalf of the Society by Opinion Leader Research (and members took the view that contributing to the OLR work was more relevant to their future); members were still protesting about the size of the 2008 retention fees; members feel disenfranchised; pharmacists do not care about the Society and consider membership a necessary evil; the elections clashed with the build up to the local government and London mayoral elections and were less entertaining; and no ballot took place in 2007 so members had got out of the habit of voting.

It is also of interest, notwithstanding their smaller constituencies, that larger proportions of members in Scotland and Wales voted: 21.5 per cent voted in Scotland for the reserved place on Council and 23.5 per cent for the Welsh Pharmacy Board.

Whatever the reasons for these figures, this is not the time to look backwards. They should also not detract from the achievements of the successful candidates. However, they do mean that the new faces, along with the existing Council members, should reflect on what this level of engagement may imply for the future professional body. It is good news that Catherine Duggan, chairman of the United Kingdom Clinical Pharmacy Association, is one of the new Council members and has already pledged the association's support for the new body. Maybe it is time for the Society to take a back seat and for others to lead: the make-up of the transitional committee (as recommended by the Clarke Inquiry to develop a prospectus for the new body) is a great opportunity for the Society's Council to send out a new message.

## Why talking to patients makes sense

Shared decision-making between clinician and patient has been advocated for at least 25 years and the idea of concordance has been on the pharmacy agenda for well over five years. Now the think tank Demos has caught up with the idea and produced a report in which it spells out the health benefits of talking to patients (p586). Clearly the message has already reached oncology pharmacists whose quality of advice is applauded in a Healthcare Commission patient satisfaction survey (p585) — and is something for all pharmacists to aspire to.

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