

Engagement and inclusion

The *Journal* recently came across a young pharmacist in her late 20s who was not aware that the Royal Pharmaceutical Society is losing its regulatory function to the General Pharmaceutical Council or of the fall-out from that decision that has beset the profession over the past year. Is this something to be deplored, or to be amazed by? Or is it actually quite common? Pharmacy politicians should be mindful of whom they must appeal to as they jockey for position over the future of the professional body.

Engagement and inclusiveness will mean different things to different people, and the Chief Executive and Registrar's view (p688) and the opinions expressed by those attending the branch representatives' meeting — reported this week (p698) — may be less relevant than those of us at the centre imagine.

There are probably many pharmacists like the one mentioned above who are very much engaged in their professional lives and in life beyond pharmacy — just not in the political process. That the goings-on at the Society mean little to them should not be a cause for despair but, perhaps, for celebration.

Here are individuals working hard to develop their knowledge and skills who would, arguably, benefit from professional support. As long as that support is of an appropriate quality and relevant content, and is delivered in a way that these busy pharmacists can benefit from, the new professional body should be able to harness the enthusiasm of all these politically disengaged pharmacists.

Of course, some pharmacists will be concerned whether full membership of the professional body needs to be restricted to pharmacists. Others will want different membership categories to be offered to other pharmacy groups. But the wranglings of those charged with setting up the new body are unlikely to affect the decision of our young pharmacist — and of others like her — on whether or not to sign up to it. We think the disengaged will worry less about the details of the structure and more about its functions. These functions must be such that they are seen by all pharmacists as being essential to support their continued engagement in the development of their professionalism.

New era for single one-off dispensing errors

To the relief of many pharmacists whose lives have been made a misery in the past year or so by the seemingly draconian investigation of all mishaps in the pharmacy, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Council has decided that the threshold criteria for the referral of cases to the Investigating Committee should be restricted to those where fitness to practise has been impaired (p677). The Society estimates that this will result in around 200 fewer referrals to the committee each year and will herald, as far as members are concerned, a more just system.

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