

Workforce update — joiners, leavers, and practising and non-practising pharmacists on the 2005 Register

In this article, Karen Hassell and Martin Eden present demographic data extracted from the 2005 Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists, focusing on those who have joined and left the Register in the previous 12 months and differences between practising and non-practising pharmacists

More pharmacists than ever before are entering the profession. But 2005 has also seen many pharmacists leaving the register. Year-on-year the registered pharmacy workforce is changing.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain recently commissioned its third workforce census. Data collected from this year's survey will be analysed alongside data gathered in 2002 and 2003.¹⁻⁸ The data analysis will be used to inform the work of the Society in relation to workforce planning, education, research, Register development and race relations legislation. Ahead of publication of this year's census findings, this article examines the demographic characteristics of the Society's current registered membership. In relation to the recent introduction of a two-part register it also explores differences between practising and non-practising

pharmacists. Finally, the characteristics of entrants to and leavers from the Register are also summarised.

Demographics and changes

On 5 August 2005, there were 46,396 pharmacists on the Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists. Of these, 54.3 per cent are female. Nearly half (47 per cent) of all pharmacists are under 40 years old. Table 1 shows age and gender of the current pharmacist population.

Female pharmacists are younger than males: 54.8 per cent of females are under 40 years of age compared with 37.5 per cent of males and the mean age for women on the Register is 40 years compared with 47 years for men. Women outnumber men by almost two to one in the under-30 age group, although most of pharmacists over 50 years old are male (61 per cent). Of men on the Register, 16.2 per cent are over state pension age but only 8.2 per cent of women are.

The total number of pharmacists fell this year. Whereas in the previous three years a steady growth of around 2.5 per cent per year has been observed, the total number on this year's Register fell to 46,396 from 47,578 in 2004, representing a decline of 2.48 per cent in the 12-month period (Table 2).

The number of women on the Register has continued to rise. However, the increase in 2005 is significantly lower than the steady increase observed in the female population between the years of 2002 and 2004 (Table 2). A small consistent growth of around 1 per cent in the number of male registrants had been seen between 2002 and 2004. In 2005, however, a fall of 5.4 per cent in the number of male pharmacists occurs.

Registered addresses of pharmacists

Most pharmacists (76 per cent) have registered addresses in England; 9.4 per cent have registered addresses in Scotland and 4.8 per cent in Wales. Over 90 per cent of pharmacists are located in Great Britain. Taking into account only those located in Great Britain, 84.3 per cent are located in England, and Scotland and Wales have 10.4 per cent and 5.3 per cent of GB pharmacists, respectively (Table 3).

There are 4,386 pharmacists on the Register who have registered addresses overseas; they account for 9.5 per cent of the total Register. In terms of actual numbers of pharmacists living or working abroad there is a relatively equal distribution of males and females, with female pharmacists with regis-

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Table 1: Number of pharmacists and non-practising pharmacists on the 2005 Register and numbers of leavers from the 2005 Register, by year and gender

Age	≤ 29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–64 years	65–69 years	70–79 years	≥ 80 years	Total
<i>All pharmacists</i>									
Male	3,169	4,500	4,582	3,612	1,317	1,282	1,445	592	20,499
Female	6,018	7,600	5,993	3,209	714	578	593	140	24,845
Total	9,187	12,100	10,575	6,821	2,031	1,860	2,038	732	45,344
<i>Non-practising pharmacists</i>									
Male	71	254	285	284	288	580	942	545	3,249
Female	140	547	525	362	236	332	452	133	2,727
Total	211	801	810	646	524	912	1,394	678	5,976
<i>Entrants</i>									
Male	654	115	*61	-	-	-	-	-	830
Female	1,313	195	*61	-	-	-	-	-	1,569
Total	1,967	310	*122	-	-	-	-	-	2,399
<i>Leavers</i>									
Male	113	174	143	146	133	280	495	371	1,885
Female	249	297	163	124	116	181	257	103	1,490
Total	362	471	306	270	249	461	752	474	3,345

* Age group 40 years and over; † Data Missing for 1,052 registrants

Table 2: Numbers of pharmacists by year and gender

Year	2002	2003	2004	2005
The Register				
Male	21,912	22,152	22,396	21,193
Female	23,355	24,233	25,182	25,203
Total	45,267	46,385	47,578	46,396
Entrants				
Male	-	806	826	837
Female	-	1,340	1,450	1,575
Total	-	2,146	2,276	2,412

tered addresses overseas representing just under 9 per cent of the total registered female population (2,213 out of a total of 25,203), and males representing just over 10 per cent (2,173 out of the total male population of 21,193).

Practising and non-practising

Almost 14 per cent ($n=6,307$) of the 2005 Register is made up of pharmacists who have chosen to join the non-practising Register. For the most part these are pharmacists who are currently either economically inactive or employed outside pharmacy.

At the time of the last census in 2003 only a small proportion (16 per cent, $n=1,014$) of these non-practising pharmacists were recorded as being actively employed and a third ($n=334$) of these were working outside pharmacy.

Of the pharmacists who are currently non-practising, but who were working in a pharmacy-related job at the time of the 2003 pharmacy workforce census, 70 per cent (591 of 680) were working part-time (less than 33 hours per week); a substantial proportion (39 per cent) were working less than 10 hours a week. Nearly three-quarters (73 per cent) were employed in the community pharmacy sector and most of these (62 per cent) were working as locum pharmacists.

The age distribution of pharmacists in the practising section of the Register closely matches the age distribution of all registrants as a whole, but non-practising pharmacists are generally older (Table 1), with 60 per cent over 60 years of age. They have a mean age of 60 years compared with 41 years for practising pharmacists.

Well over half (54.4 per cent) of the non-practising section of the Register is male, but men represent a much smaller 44 per cent of

the practising section. Among both practising and non-practising pharmacists women are younger than men: 38 and 44 years for the practising pharmacists, and 54 and 65 years for the non-practising pharmacists. A quarter of the non-practising females are under 39 years, and over two-fifths (44.5 per cent) are under 49 years.

A small proportion (7 per cent) of practising pharmacists have registered addresses overseas; 78.5 per cent are located in England, nearly 10 per cent in Scotland and 5 per cent in Wales. Overseas pharmacists represent a much larger proportion (26 per cent) of the non-practising section of the Register, although the majority (62 per cent) are still located in England.

Age and gender of new entrants

The fall in the overall size of the Register cannot be attributed to fewer pharmacists entering the profession. The number of pharmacists entering the profession in 2005 has increased in similar proportions to previous years (around 6 per cent). Table 2 shows that this year's intake is in keeping with that of recent years' in terms of both overall numbers and also the respective numbers of male and female entrants.

Nearly two-thirds (65.3 per cent) of new entrants to the 2005 Register are female. The mean age of new entrants is 26.8 years. The mean age of female entrants is 26.4 years compared with 27.7 years for male entrants.

Table 1 shows age bands and gender of new entrants. For those aged under 30 years who are new to the Register, women outnumber men by more than two to one. Women also outnumber men in the 30 to 39 year age band, but not to the same degree.

Pharmacists with overseas addresses make up 9.2 per cent (223) of the total number of new entrants in 2005 (Table 3). On the whole, the proportions of new entrants in each of the four locations (England, Scotland, Wales and overseas) mirror the location of all registrants as a whole.

Ethnicity

A marked difference between the demographic make-up of the Register population as a whole and that of the new entrants is also evident in terms of ethnicity. White British, White Irish and White Other ethnic groups make up three-quarters of the Register where ethnic group is recorded (Table 4). Seventeen per cent of the Register population, where ethnic group is known, has a

recorded ethnicity of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi. Chinese and Black ethnic groups each account for 3 per cent of the total. Ethnicity is unknown for 6,593 pharmacists (14.2 per cent).

In contrast with the entire Register, the new entrants are more ethnically diverse (Table 4).

Table 4: Ethnicity of pharmacists on the Register and of entrants

Ethnicity	The Register		Entrants	
White	29,817	74.9%	1,330	60.0%
Asian	6,849	17.2%	544	24.5%
Chinese	1,289	3.2%	138	6.2%
Black	1,124	2.8%	119	5.4%
Other	462	1.2%	61	2.8%
Mixed	262	0.7%	25	1.1%
Total	39,803	100.0%	2,217	100.0%
<i>Missing data</i>	<i>6,593</i>		<i>195</i>	

Sixty per cent of new entrants with a recorded ethnic group are White compared to 75 per cent of all pharmacists whose ethnicity is known.

One-quarter (25 per cent) of new entrants with a recorded ethnicity are Asian British compared to less than one-fifth (17 per cent) of the entire Register with a recorded ethnic group of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi. Black British and Chinese ethnic groups account for a greater proportion of the new entrant population than for the register population as a whole.

Leavers

Despite the fact that in 2005 more pharmacists joined the Register than in any previous year, a decline in the total number of pharmacists on the Register is evident. More than three times as many pharmacists left the Register this year than in 2004 (3,594 compared with 1,122).

Almost three-fifths (57 per cent) of leavers were male. The average recorded age of those leaving the Register in the past year is 58.9 years although age is unknown for 249 leavers (7 per cent). Comparisons between gender and age of the leavers show that female leavers are generally younger than their male counterparts. The average age of male leavers is 64.7 years compared with 52.3 years for females. The mode age of women leavers is 28 years whereas the mode age for male leavers is 67 years. The bimodal distribution pattern of 2005 leavers is illustrated in Table 1. Almost two-thirds of leavers under the age of 40 are women (65.5 per cent) but more than twice as many men account for those leavers over the age of 65 years (1,146 men compared with 541 women).

Pharmacists over state pensionable age account for over half of the total population of leavers (53.9 per cent) where age is known. Men make up 63.5 per cent of those leaving who are over state pensionable age (1,106 out of 1,803).

Interestingly, more than one-third of all leavers (34.7 per cent) had registered addresses overseas (Table 3); however, the majority of those leaving the Register who were under state pensionable age were registered as overseas pharmacists (60.3 per cent).

At the time of the 2003 census, 14 per cent of the leavers ($n=516$) were employed in a pharmacy-related occupation. Like the

Table 3: Location of pharmacists on the Register and of entrants and leavers

Location	The Register		Entrants		Leavers	
England	35,397	76.3%	1,881	78.0%	1,953	54.3%
Scotland	4,367	9.4%	199	8.3%	243	6.8%
Wales	2,246	4.8%	109	4.5%	152	4.2%
Overseas	4,386	9.5%	223	9.2%	1,246	34.7%
Total	46,396	100.0%	2,412	100.0%	3,594	100.0%

non-practising group of pharmacists most of the leavers who were working at the time of the 2003 census worked in the community pharmacy sector (73 per cent), and 63 per cent of these worked as community locums. Over half (54 per cent) worked part-time (less than 33 hours per week), with 30 per cent working under 10 hours a week.

Summary

Previous analysis of the Register indicated that it has been increasing in size by around 2 per cent per year since 1991.¹ This year, however, the number of pharmacists decreased by 2.48 per cent. After recent restructuring of the Register non-practising pharmacists now represent almost 14 per cent of GB registrants.

The decline in overall numbers on the Register is attributable to a higher than average number of pharmacists leaving, rather than a decline in the number of new entrants to the profession.

Although it is natural for any loss from the Register to give rise to some concern, findings presented here suggest that the majority of recent leavers are either living or working overseas, living in Great Britain but not employed as a pharmacist in any capacity and usually over retirement age or, where employed at the last workforce census, only working a few hours per week. Similarly, in the main the non-practising Register is also

made up of older pharmacists previously not actively employed or working less than 10 hours a week on average. Pharmacists with a registered address overseas are also represented in much larger proportions on the non-practising Register than on the practising Register.

Thus, any alarm felt at losing practising pharmacists from the labour market at a time when the profession is being affected by workforce shortages needs to be tempered by the knowledge that most leavers were not contributing significantly to the labour market anyway, and by the revelation that the number of new entrants continues to grow.

The gap between numbers of male and female pharmacists continues to widen. Just

over 54 per cent of the whole register, and 56 per cent of the practising section of the register is now made up of women. A bigger loss in the numbers of male pharmacists leaving the Register and a bigger increase in the number of women among new entrants contribute to the continuing feminisation of the pharmacy profession in Britain.

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