

# Students vote on issues relating to new services in community contract

Students voted for nationally recognised training for enhanced services, increased publicity of essential and advanced services, and a system for making GP and specialist referrals at this year's British Pharmaceutical Student's Association conference. **Gemma Cleveland** reports

There should be nationally recognised training courses for enhanced services under the new pharmacy contract, to ensure consistency of service provision.

This was one of the motions relating to the new community pharmacy contract proposed at this year's British Pharmaceutical Student's Association annual conference, held in Bradford.

Gemma Donovan, Manchester, who proposed the motion, said that local commissioning of enhanced services by individual primary care trusts was a problem since training for provision of the services is only recognised within each PCT. She argued that the current set up, a particular problem for locum pharmacists who work in several different PCTs, is a waste of time and money if a phar-

macist is trained to provide enhanced services in one area only.

Other students supported Miss Donovan's proposal, including Becky Haxell, Manchester, who seconded the motion and used an example from her workplace to illustrate the problem. "We have three or four pharmacists in our pharmacy and only one is [trained] to give out emergency hormonal contraception," she said. The majority of students supported the motion and it was carried forward as BPSA policy.

Another proposal addressed publicity of new services within the contract. Nicola Shaw, Bradford, proposed that the Royal Pharmaceutical Society should widen current publicity campaigns to increase public awareness and uptake of new essential and ad-

vanced services available from community pharmacies. Miss Shaw argued that, at present, awareness in the community about the services was limited and in some cases members of the public were hesitant to participate due to a lack of information.

Other students were of the opinion that it was too early to criticise publicity of the services since it is not known yet what health care organisations, such as the Department of Health, have planned to promote the services. Taking this into account, an amendment to the motion was proposed by James Wood, ex-Aston, and it was carried, with student's agreeing that the Royal Pharmaceutical Society should liaise with other health care organisations to widen current publicity campaigns.

## System for making GP and specialist appointments

There should be a system for making GP appointments and referrals to secondary care for patients in community pharmacies.

This motion was proposed by Jennifer De Val, ex-Nottingham, who said that it would be much better if the community pharmacist, after deciding to refer a patient, could actually make the appointment with the GP or specialist, rather than have patients do it themselves. Miss De Val thought this would enhance the professional role of the pharmacist and would ensure patients receive the care they needed.

Some students, such as Tom Wylie, ex-Nottingham, however, did not support the motion. He argued that there "was a danger of cutting out GPs, the experts in diagnosis" with this sort of arrangement. "GPs are better placed to refer patients for specialist care" and the system that is suggested in this motion "may leave some pharmacists overwhelmed", he said.

Despite Mr Wylie's comments, support from the students was strong and the motion was carried to become BPSA policy.

## Pharmacy student of the year announced

Alison Coll, a first-year student at Medway University, Kent, was the winner of this year's Reckitt Benckiser "Pharmacy student of the year" award. She won a trip to the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation congress in Cairns, Australia. The runner up was Catherine Cross, a fourth-year student from Bath University.

The four other finalists were Arpana Gupta, Aston University, Stacy Piper, University of Bath, Sarah Bush, Cardiff University and Monika Lenik, University of Brighton. The photograph shows Alison Coll



with Gerald Alexander (left), Vice-President of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, and Gautam Paul, president of the BPSA.

### Some of the other issues debated at the BPSA conference

#### Motions carried

- There should be a legal requirement that a prescriber should document a patient's allergy status on a prescription
- Branded prescribing should be banned on the NHS, unless therapeutically indicated or for clarity of the prescription
- Every solid dosage form of a licensed medicine sold or supplied in the UK should have a unique identification characteristic
- All practising pharmacists should hold a current first aid certificate

#### Motions not carried

- The link between registration as a pharmacist and membership of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society should remain unchanged
- Students should receive copies of *The Pharmaceutical Journal* free of charge

The British Pharmaceutical Students Association 64th annual conference took place at University of Bradford, from 8–15 April

# Panel share views on supervision and the future

Students questioned a panel of pharmacists and a technician from different fields of practice about their opinions.

The panel was chaired by Digby Emson, chairman of the Company Chemists Association, and included Kevin Frost, secretary of the Bradford branch of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, Gill Risby, lead for pharmacy technical and support staff at the development unit, University of Leeds, John D'Arcy, chief executive of the National Pharmacy Association, Fiona Cruickshank, managing director of The Specials Laboratory Ltd, and Emily Horwill, a pharmacist at the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust.

Members of the panel were asked about the changes to proposed supervision requirements. Mr D'Arcy said: "It is a direction of travel we cannot avoid." With regard to the idea of pharmacists not being physically present at the point of dispensing, he thought accredited technicians probably better for the specific task of checking prescriptions. What we also have to consider, he said, is what the pharmacists are going to be leaving for. "What will the safety requirements be?"

Mr D'Arcy brought up a concern that some community pharmacies might use the constant presence of a pharmacist as a "selling point". He was also concerned that liability could become an issue for personnel at all levels (ie, from front shop assistant through to superintendent pharmacists) if errors were made, depending on their responsibilities.

Miss Horwill was positive about the possible changes in supervision. "Do the skills of

the pharmacist need to be in the same place as where dispensing takes place," she asked. Miss Horwill did not necessarily see change as a bad thing as long as a pharmacist is available. She said that in hospitals it "is already sort of taking place" since pharmacists are often absent from hospital dispensaries on ward rounds.

Ms Risby and Ms Cruickshank were also in favour of a change in the supervision requirements.

Mr Frost, however, was against any change: "I really don't like it," he said. He thought public access to a pharmacist important. Pharmacists do not just supervise dispensing, he said.

The panel also shared their views on how they saw pharmacy developing in the future. In community pharmacy Mr Frost said that he sees a system where the doctor would diagnose an illness or condition and present this to the pharmacist, who would then choose the best medicine for the patient.

In industry Ms Cruickshank said that she sees a market with more biologically derived medicines, more novel devices, gene therapies and tailor-made medicines.

In hospital pharmacy, Miss Horwill said that she envisages pharmacists becoming more like therapeutic consultants with the hospital dispensaries run by technical support.



Left to right, chairman Digby Emson with Kevin Frost, Gill Risby, John D'Arcy, Fiona Cruickshank and Emily Horwill during the question and answer session

## McNeil "Responding to symptoms" winner



Winner Alison Holmes (left) with Becky Bradburn from McNeil Ltd

The winner of the McNeil "Responding to symptoms" competition was Alison Holmes, a third-year student from Nottingham. This award is judged on a student's ability to counsel a patient in a given scenario. Miss Holmes received £250.

## Entrepreneur summons students to industry

Fiona Cruickshank, managing director of The Specials Laboratory Ltd, said that the pharmaceutical industry is more accessible to pharmacists than is generally perceived: "You don't need a first class degree, a PhD or experience," she explained, "although there will be lots of paperwork." One can receive a broad training in many areas of industry. "Think long term," she said.

Ms Cruickshank, a pharmacist, started The Specials Laboratory from scratch. It manufactures unlicensed medicines for the retail pharmaceutical and health care markets. She told students that she spent many years working for drug companies, mainly in manufacturing, and when she saw an opportunity in the market, managed to secure a loan and start her own company.

Ms Cruickshank encouraged the students to "be their own boss" and think about enterprise as an option for the future. The Specials Laboratory began with three employees and now employs over 96 people. Ms Cruickshank said that she prefers to employ pharmacists because, in her opinion, graduates from other scientific disciplines are not as

patient-oriented: "They just don't 'get' patients," she said.

Ms Cruickshank spoke about the myriad of opportunities in industry. She encouraged students to investigate roles such as those in the regulatory, clinical, manufacturing, medical and pharmacovigilance areas. "The title of a Qualified Person, is something you could aspire to," she suggested. Years of experience across many different industrial areas is required for this role although a Qualified Person is generously compensated, she said.

## BPSA election results

Jennifer de Val, ex-Nottingham, was elected the next BPSA president at the conference. Miss De Val was this year's treasurer and is currently undertaking her preregistration training with Boots The Chemists. Amy Lepiorz, ex-Sunderland, was elected vice-president.

Gautam Paul, current president, was made an honorary life member of the association.

## Correction

Jennifer de Val is currently undertaking her preregistration training at Barts and The London NHS Trust and not as reported (p508).