

PHARMACISTS PRESCRIBING BY 2003, SAYS CHIEF PHARMACIST

Jim Smith says that progress has been made on extending prescribing responsibilities

The first wave of pharmacists with prescribing responsibilities could emerge within the next two years, according to Dr Jim Smith (chief pharmaceutical officer, Department of Health).

Dr Smith was delivering the keynote address at the Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists national weekend school in Harrogate on April 6. He announced that a new advisory committee would be established under the Medicines Act 1968 to advise Health Ministers on extended prescribing rights. The committee would comprise pharmacists, as well as doctors and nurses.

On staff recruitment and retention, Dr Smith said that he was aware of the acute pressures facing many hospital pharmacy departments and commended the efforts of pharmacy managers and staff in

maintaining services despite the difficulties. He added that new initiatives in pharmacy would only increase further the demand for pharmacists and therefore it was especially important to expend every effort to attract new pharmacists and technicians.

According to Dr Smith, work was under way on pay modernisation and the Department of Health would continue to engage in discussions with the guild.

Dr Smith also stressed the role of hospital pharmacists in reducing medication errors. He said that about 1.5 per cent of hospital inpatients in the United Kingdom were exposed to medication errors. About a quarter of these errors had the potential to be serious.

Hospital pharmacists, Dr Smith said, had made great strides in improving the overall standard of prescribing and administration but more could still be done. He said that hospital manufacturing was a problem area and announced that a risk assessment review of manufacturing was almost complete and would provide a

good framework for a co-ordinated national approach.

A new leaflet on hospital pharmacy was launched at the guild weekend school. The leaflet is entitled "Hospital pharmacy — the right medicine." Announcing the launch, guild president, Helen Remington, said that the leaflet, which highlighted the skills of hospital pharmacists and their contribution to patient care, was intended for decision-makers and others who could have an

influence on the state of hospital pharmacy. The booklet was produced in conjunction with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Hospital Pharmacists Group.

Mrs Remington also announced the formation of an information technology special interest group of the guild. She said that the new group was timely in view of the fact that a number of hospital pharmacists were currently working towards the implementation of electronic prescribing.

MSF members say yes to merger

Members of the union for manufacturing science and finance workers, MSF, have recently voted to merge with the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (AEEU).

In a postal ballot of members of both unions in March, 79.8 per cent of MSF members voted in support of the merger.

The Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists, which is part of MSF, currently has about 2,600 members.

Speaking at the Guild of

Healthcare Pharmacists annual weekend school, Helen Remington (guild president), said that some changes were expected, and the guild would be working closely with the health sector of MSF on this matter.

The merger between MSF and AEEU will create a union representing about one million members. Recruitment of more members will be a priority in its first year.

A name for the new union has not yet been decided.

Pay rise for hospital pharmacists

Pay rises for hospital pharmacists working for the National Health Service have been announced.

For 2000–01, salaries will be increased by 3.25 per cent or £300, whichever is greater, while for 2001–02, the increase will be 3.7 per cent or £380. London allowances are to rise by 3.25 per cent and 3.7 per cent respectively.

A 3.7 per cent increase in emergency duty allowances for 2001–02 has also been approved. However, negotiations continue on the uplift in emergency duty allowances for 2000–01.

Gerry Looker (Guild of

Healthcare Pharmacists section general secretary), said: "We are disappointed that the management side failed to increase the emergency duty commitment responsibility allowance for 2000 in line with the salary uplift. However, we will be supporting members initially in the submission of claims at trust level for an improvement to this allowance, at least in line with the salary uplift."

Full details of the effect of the salary increases for different grades of pharmacists were published in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* (March 17, p343).

CPP LAUNCHES NEW PRESCRIBING FACULTY

Faculty of prescribing and medicines management will provide professional network for peer support

The College of Pharmacy Practice launched its faculty of prescribing and medicines management on March 15.

Among other things, the faculty will provide a strong and influential focus for developing and delivering specialist views and input into national initiatives, a professional network for peer support, accreditation of training targeted at the specialty's needs, and a visible recognition of membership of a prestigious national body.

Dr Jim Smith, chief

pharmaceutical officer at the Department of Health, told the audience that as a long-standing member of the college he welcomed the new faculty. The college had a good track record in promoting pharmacy, and was the first pharmaceutical organisation to get members to commit to a learning programme every year. Dr Smith added that he strongly supported the initiative and wished it every success.

Taking questions from the floor, the presenters were asked how the college would bring hospital pharmacists into the faculty. Professor Bryan Veitch, chairman of the college's governors, replied that hospitals had a mix of pharmacists and skills, and they needed to get together with pharmacists in other sectors. Joe Asghar, Pharmaceutical Advisers' Group, stated that many advisers had

dealings with secondary care but the focus should not be about where pharmacists were working but what tasks they were doing. Dr Smith said that that there was a need to integrate primary and secondary care. Clive Jackson, director, National Prescribing Centre, added that primary care-based organisations now supported prescribing across the profession.

Associate membership of the college is open to any pharmacist in the UK. Pharmacists wishing to become an associate of the faculty must be able to show an interest in prescribing and medicines management.

The college intends that initial recruitment will be complete by early June and that by the end of September the action plan and recommendations for competencies will have been circulated to faculty members.

brief

The College of Pharmacy Practice is to hold its annual college day on May 3 at Dunchurch Park conference centre, Warwickshire. The day will include a seminar on Parkinson's disease. Details from Teresa Holloway on 024 7669 2400 or on the college's website (www.collpharm.org.uk).

The Joint Pharmaceutical Analysis Group (JPAG) of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and the Royal Society of Chemistry is to hold a conference on "The new clinical trials directive: implications for clinical trial supplies" on Thursday, June 14, at the Society's headquarters in London. The registration fee is £70 (£100 for non-members). Details from John Clements (jclements@rpsgb.org.uk).

An award is being offered for proposals in evidence based pharmacy practice, in an initiative by the Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists, the National Pharmaceutical Association and Merck, Sharp & Dohme. The award, worth £5,000, is open to all pharmacists but must reflect a joint project between community and hospital pharmacy. The prize will be used to fund the research proposal. The closing date for applications is July 31. Details from MSD on 01992 452370.

Corrections In the March issue of *Hospital Pharmacist*, there was a misprint in question three of the Credit for Learning exercise. The question should have read, "In the initial treatment of lupus nephritis, the following would be acceptable:." The College of Pharmacy Practice will not mark this question. Respondents will receive the answer booklet from the college with the correct question and answer.

Technician training post gets support

AAH Hospital Service is providing financial support for a technician teacher-practitioner post in Scotland.

The post of principal technician for education and training is a joint appointment between the Lothian University Hospitals NHS Trust pharmacy service and Telford College, Edinburgh.

Lynn Leitch, the current postholder, told *Hospital Pharmacist* that she had worked in various teams to develop qualifications that could support service developments taking place in hospital pharmacy departments. These teams were formed at the request of the Association of Scottish Trust Chief Pharmacists. Already, the post has resulted in the introduction of the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) level III in the Lothian area for student pharmacy technicians and the introduction of advanced qualifications for pharmacy technicians.

Dr Norman Lannigan (chief pharmacist, Lothian University Hospitals) said that he approached AAH Hospital Service for support after the company had introduced its annual pharmacy technician

award. He hoped that this support would enable Ms Leitch to continue working towards developing relevant qualifications to support the extended roles for pharmacy support staff.