

What do readers think about the *Hospital Pharmacist*?

By Gareth Jones, MRPharmS

Hospital Pharmacist periodically asks its readers what they think about the journal. A readership survey was sent out to all subscribers with the March issue. This article outlines the results of the questionnaires returned from over 540 pharmacists



Readership surveys were sent out with *Hospital Pharmacist*

Hospital *Pharmacist* exists to publish news, articles, reports and papers on hospital pharmacy and it is important that from time to time we seek feedback from our readers. The latest readership survey, sent out with the March issue, was returned by over 540 pharmacist representing a broad cross section of the profession (see Panel 1, p272). The breadth of current hospital pharmacy practice was demonstrated by over 50 different specialist areas being covered by the responses. The overall impression is that the scope, quality and content of *Hospital Pharmacist* are about right, with 404 respondents reading every issue, but a number of useful points have also been raised.

— Benchmarking

Readers were invited to benchmark the *Hospital Pharmacist* against other journals frequently read by hospital pharmacists: *BMJ*, *Pharmacy in Practice*, *Prescriber* and *The Pharmaceutical Journal*. They were asked to identify the most relevant, interesting, authoritative, credible and useful journal. *Hospital Pharmacist* and *The Pharmaceutical Journal* were first and second respectively under the most relevant, interesting and useful categories. The *BMJ* was top for most authoritative and most credible. *Hospital Pharmacist* scored better than *Pharmacy in Practice* and *Prescriber* in all categories.

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— Special feature

The special feature was the most read section of the journal, with 429 readers always or usually reading the articles. Most attempted the Life-long Learning questions (341), with over 200 sending the answers in to be marked. The frequency of the Life-long Learning questions has been increased so that they will accompany every special feature (10 times a year) and this is a move that seems to be supported.

One reader commented that the Life-long Learning questions are increasingly specialised and difficult, although many others commented that the level was what they needed. Hospital pharmacists practise at many different levels and the aim with the special feature is to cater not for the specialist in that field, but for a hospital pharmacist who may be new to an area or covering it for a colleague.

— Comment

Some readers called for the introduction of a letters section and more editorial style articles similar to "Broad spectrum" in *The Pharmaceutical Journal*. *Hospital Pharmacist* can be a vehicle for debate, but for this to happen, more contributions from the readership would be required. The comment article at the start of each issue is one such opportunity to propose new ideas, but these are rarely submitted without commissioning. We encourage all hospital pharmacists to submit letters or 900-word

editorials for publication, which would allow the journal to become more of a forum for debate.

— News

In the era of the internet and daily e-mail news alerts, it could be suggested that there is no place for a news section in a monthly publication. Editorials and production deadlines mean that it can take up to six weeks from a news event to the issue of *Hospital Pharmacist* reaching readers. However, 418 of the 520 readers who gave an opinion about this section always or usually read it. It may be that information overload results in people looking for a periodical update on recent news stories, or alternatively, the quotes from opinion leaders that are not available from immediate news alerts may explain why readers clearly value this section.

— Careers

Careers was a new feature launched in *Hospital Pharmacist* in February 2004. The most common response to this section was "sometimes read it". It is to be expected that a section such as this which presents information on various career paths in pharmacy may appeal more to those starting out in the profession. However, the goal will be to mix such articles with ones on topics such as the Knowledge and Skills Framework, which should be of interest to all pharmacists, whatever level they have reached.

— Focus on technicians

Focus on technicians is the section which least interests our readership, with 187 rarely or never reading the articles. As developments with technicians are likely to involve activities which pharmacists have already undertaken for many years, this lack of interest may not be surprising. However, it is quite clear that new roles for pharmacists will depend on technicians also expanding their responsibilities to fill the gap. Therefore, we intend to continue to publish this series as a way of encouraging the sharing of best practice and extended roles for pharmacy technicians.

— Conclusions

We would like to thank all those who took the time to complete the questionnaire and provide comments. The overall results and all individual comments have been read by the editorial team of *Hospital Pharmacist*. Participation in the consultation exercise is clearly self-selecting — pharmacists who do not remove the journal from the wrappers would not have found the survey. However, the results seem to indicate that *Hospital Pharmacist* is valued by most of the target readership. A selection of further comments from readers is presented in Panel 2.

Panel 1: Grade and age-group of readers responding to survey

Survey replies by Whitley Council grade

■ A–C	64
■ D	171
■ E	106
■ F	45
■ G–H	20

Survey replies by Agenda for Change pay band (where known)

■ 6	12
■ 7	45
■ 8a	77
■ 8b	32
■ 8c	21
■ 8d	13
■ 9	4

Age group

■ 21–30	73
■ 31–45	219
■ 46–60	139
■ 61+	27

There were 543 responses to the survey. Readers were asked to state their Whitley Council grade and Agenda for Change band, if known

Panel 2: Readers' comments

- “Give a case study with the special feature articles”
- “Brilliant — I wish it was a weekly publication”
- “Need greater emphasis on practice research and international news”
- “Too much information on conferences”
- “Useful information regarding Agenda for Change and recent pension review”
- “Include articles comparing then and now — showing how rapidly ideas and procedures change”
- “Good journal with a varied content — always topical issues”
- “Now CPD is with us, it is more important to me”
- “I find the CPD articles useful for updating my knowledge outside my specialty”
- “More multidisciplinary input into articles — most are written by pharmacists”
- “Please include clinical case studies and more articles on how to appraise clinical papers”