

An insult to employers

From Mr L. W. Kong, MRPharmS

Your leading article "How much are you worth?" (P7, 1 June, p750) neglects the problem of how employers are to afford to pay a locum at the rates quoted.

If you analysed the cost to dispense a prescription item compared against our reimbursement by the Government, you would see that a locum would have to dispense about 25 items an hour for the employer to break even. Small pharmacies do not generate such business and therefore cannot afford to pay locum rates of £15+ per hour.

Should there not be a proportional rate of pay? I am certain that locums would expect higher pay to work in busy dispensaries and likewise they should expect lower rates in quieter pharmacies.

It is insulting to employers for you to encourage pharmacists

to "refuse to work unless you are paid at least £19 an hour".

Perhaps you should address your views to the Minister of Health in order to obtain a basic rate for pharmacies. There are so many services that we provide without payment and many more we are being asked to do.

Leslie Kong
Edinburgh

Why we cannot support the Council's proposals

From a group of past presidents of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Your leading article (P7, 29 June, p894) encourages members of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society to consider the relative merits of the proposals for reform of the Society's constitution put forward by the

Council and the Young Pharmacists Group.

Recent articles published in *The Journal* have explained the origins and structure of the Society. It is a professional representative body that has been given regulatory and law enforcement duties by statute. For nearly 70 years the Society has performed its dual role as representative body and professional regulator, and the membership has stated clearly that it should continue to perform both functions in the future.

As past presidents of the Society we believe the profession should be proud that its representative body has been entrusted by government to perform the professional regulation of pharmacists for so many years, with a Council comprised of 21 elected pharmacists and three lay members appointed by the Privy Council.

A representative body must be governed by the people it represents — how else can it be representative? The Government has decided that substantial lay membership is needed for per-

formance of regulatory functions, to ensure that they properly represent the public interest. We understand and support this view. But it is fundamentally wrong to compare, as the Council's consultations do, the Society only with other health regulators, such as the General Medical Council and the General Dental Council. These are simply regulatory bodies. The professional representative bodies for doctors and dentists are the British Medical Association and the British Dental Association, governed by doctors and dentists. The Society, uniquely among the health professions, combines the two roles.

We would only support a structure that will ensure that the professional representative role of the Society continues to be performed by a body with a similar professional/lay composition to the present, with the lay member involvement in the regulatory functions required by the Government. This will balance the member's professional interest with the public interest. The Council's propos-

als have the inevitable consequence that the professional representative function is subjugated to the regulatory role. We cannot support that, and would encourage members to write a one-line letter or e-mail to Lambeth: "I support the principles in the alternative proposals put forward by the Young Pharmacists Group in the *Pf* of 29 June."

Send it now!

John Balmford
Jim Bannerman
Geoff Booth
Ian Caldwell
David Coleman
Bill Darling
Colin Hitchings
Hopkin Maddock
Marion Rawlings
David Sharpe
Nick Wood

Past Presidents

Royal Pharmaceutical Society

Time to offer the membership a choice

From Mr M. Koziol, MRPharmS

No one doubts that we should modernise the structure of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society and already there is general support for the idea that the Society should retain both membership and regulatory roles. However, your leader last week (*Pf*, 29 June, p894) succinctly got to the crux of the modernisation debate, which is that two schools of thought have emerged.

There is the Lambeth view (for to call it a Council view would be unfair), which is to have a much increased lay representation on the main Council and for the Council to become predominantly a regulator in the broadest sense of the word. And there is the Young Pharmacists Group view, which is that there should be a separate committee within the Society's structure to deliver the regulatory requirements expounded by the Kennedy report while the Council remains as it is, served by a pharmacist majority and becoming predominantly a representative body focused on the membership.

The YPG view was promulgated both before and after the branch representatives' meeting and the Society's annual general meeting, and was informed by

the debates that occurred therein. The unanimous views expressed by pharmacists at these meetings indicated that the members want the Society at least to maintain if not to improve its representative roles. This would not be a realistic proposition if the Lambeth plan to make the Council primarily a regulatory committee were to go ahead. Furthermore, the representatives gathered gave support to the idea that there should be a subcommittee within the Society's structure that should deliver the regulatory requirements and that this could indeed have a much greater lay input. The representatives indicated that they were keen to see the full Council remaining as a body elected by pharmacists with pharmacists in the vast majority, as is currently the case.

Your leader, having described these two choices then goes on to urge pharmacists to make their views known by completing the questionnaire which was enclosed in the same issue of *The Journal*.

Sadly, I could not find the question that gave me a say as to which of these two schools of thought I would support. This is unfortunate because I would hazard to suggest that few pharmacists could fail to see the huge benefits of being able to strengthen the regulatory arrangements in line with Kennedy while at the same time enhancing enormously the Society's capacity to improve its membership representative role.

I believe that the support for this idea would be overwhelming and that the time has now come for the membership to be formally offered a choice. If Lambeth

is genuine about its desire to seek consultation with the membership, then it needs to ask the membership where the emphasis should lie.

Do we want a future Society that can have a strong focus on the membership but at the same time one that can deliver robust regulation, or a future Society that is predominantly a regulator with a much weaker focus on the membership?

The results of such a survey would provide a good direction to the elected Council.

Mark Koziol
Birmingham

YPG proposals would not weaken the Council

From Mr N. J. Wicks, MRPharmS

Regarding the future structure of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the position of the Young Pharmacists Group is that the Council should continue practically as it is with pharmacists in the vast majority and subject only to some enhancements to do with improving representation. The Council would concentrate on the membership and professional development roles. The regulatory affairs of the Society should then be delegated by the Council to a new Pharmacy Regulation and Compliance Committee. This committee would have a hugely increased lay representation as required by the Kennedy report (*Pf*, 29 June, p906).

Your leading article (*Pf*, 29 June, p894) suggested that the Council would be weakened if the Privy Council had to intervene in any disputes that the Society's Council might have with the proposed PRCC. But, in practice, such an intervention could never occur because, if the Council were to delegate regulatory affairs to the PRCC, then the PRCC would take complete responsibility and would be the final decision maker as far as regulatory matters were concerned.

Such an arrangement is not unique. Currently, it exists with the Statutory Committee, which runs as an entirely independent body within the Society.

In the unlikely event that there are major policy issues with which the Council was at odds with the PRCC, these could be dealt with in the same way as such issues are currently dealt with between, say, the General Medical Council (regulatory) and the British Medical Association (representative), through open dialogue between the two.

Any current Council members who hanker for regulatory power should simply stand for a pharmacist seat on the proposed PRCC. Those pharmacists who want to lead the membership and promote and develop the profession could stand for Council.

Noel Wicks
Chairman
Young Pharmacists Group

Are lay people to set our professional agenda?

From Mr A. C. Gush, MRPharmS

As a practising pharmacist I welcome the moves by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society to become a modern regulator with a Council made up possibly by 40 to 50 per cent lay members. What I do not welcome is the same Council setting our professional agenda. This is an unacceptable situation which demonstrates why the Society should have chosen between being a modern regulator or being the professional organisation for pharmacy.

Andrew Gush
Bridgend,
Mid Glamorgan

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