



## The branch, the pizza box and the future of pharmacy

For most readers of *Network News*, the “pizza boxes” (is it only my husband who calls them that?) will finally have landed. The continuing professional development (CPD) roll-out will be completed by October this year, and pharmacists will have had the opportunity to consider the new system and what it means to them.

There are several possible responses to receiving the CPD pack: from mild-to-moderate interest to mild-to-moderate panic. I doubt that anyone ripped it open and immediately played the video and made a record. Like me, several people probably lost their ID and password for the website, until it reappeared from beneath a pile of paper. I suspect that a significant number of pharmacists planned to leave the practising register as soon as the changes are implemented.

What we hope is that most pharmacists will recognise that embracing the concept of CPD and acting upon it will have benefits for ourselves personally and as a profession.

I have attended many branch meetings about CPD over the past couple of years. There were notable common features:

- They were well attended
- Strong views were expressed for and against the concept
- Pharmacists from sectors other than community and hospital were concerned about what it means for them
- The Society speakers had the opportunity to address a lot of misunderstandings
- The Society speakers learnt a lot from members

The result of these meetings has been the development of initiatives that put the local branch at the centre of CPD support for pharmacists. The “CPD toolkit” has been created as a series of interactive modules that can be bolted on to a branch meeting on any topic. The half-hour modules can also be combined to form a meeting in their own right. The principle is that these modules illuminate some of the basic concepts (and misconceptions) about CPD and present the subject matter in entertaining ways. Modules have been piloted at branch meetings and the feedback so far has been positive. Many thanks to the branches that took part — Harrow and Hillingdon, Central Lancashire and Sunderland.

Of course, the paper stuff and presentations are not the most important part of the

support system. We need people, real people — pharmacists to whom other pharmacists can relate. We are delighted to report that we have recruited 21 local CPD facilitators who will work across a defined local area to support the branches on that patch. These local contacts will be able to use the toolkit at branch meetings and will be a general source of advice.

Extending the support network even further, each branch has been invited to send one or two members to a series of CPD seminars. This means that each branch will have direct access to interested pharmacists who may help to act as informal mentors to other pharmacists on the patch. The CPD facilitators will support them. So the team is really now quite extensive.

I am sure that the branches will make the difference between the feelings of mild-to-moderate interest and the mild-to-moderate panic. I have already seen the relief and understanding among members who have attended these meetings. I look forward to the “you show me your CPD record and I’ll show you mine” meetings of the future. I will certainly need something like that.

### Leadership development

Although CPD is undoubtedly the subject that is taxing most branches and members, there are other important developments that merit mention here.

The Society is launching a “local leadership” initiative, and branch secretaries who attended the branch representatives’ meeting in May will have heard David Pruce, director of practice and quality improvement, talk about the Society’s plans. Identifying local pharmacy leaders (both the obvious and the less obvious) is crucial within the context of greater devolution and local negotiation. The branch network contains many local leaders, and we look forward to working with you on this.

The 2001 “Shaping up for the future” review has led to much change over the past 18 months and I know it has been far from easy for many branch officers. We recognise that and appreciate it, but the good news is

From **Nicola Gray**, member of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s Council and a Council sponsor for the “Shaping up for the future” review of the Society’s branches and regions.

that the results we are now seeing are really positive. The changes made, and new initiatives such as the “Future branch” pilot scheme, have ensured that the branches continue to have a prominent position within the Society.

Nine branches are taking part in the “Future branch scheme”, exploring new ways of organising their programmes to capture best practice and appeal to a wider pharmaceutical audience.

In addition, 50 branches have been awarded additional funding for 2004. The extra money can be used for expenses associated with organising meetings, as well as for local PR campaigns, strategic mailings on key issues to branch members and so on.

The regions have, I know, been wondering what their role will be within the reform of the Society. I have already had an interesting discussion with one region about possible ways forward, but these discussions need to spread to ensure that regions also secure their own important role. Again, increasing local devolution points towards some developments in this area.

### British Pharmaceutical Conference

I would like to remind you that the British Pharmaceutical Conference 2004 takes place at the Manchester International Convention Centre from 27 to 29 September. This is the year’s biggest event for pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists, and offers a great chance to network as well as to take part in workshops, discussions and debates on topical themes. CPD will form a large part of that debate, so if your branch has not already done so then it would be well worth considering sending one of your members to the conference.

Branches sending first time delegates to BPC can claim £250 funding from the Society to help with the cost of attending. Also I am pleased that for 2004 a special £5 rate is available for full-time students attending on the Wednesday. This initiative is being supported by the British Pharmaceutical Students Association and full details are available by visiting the BPC website at [www.BPC2004.org](http://www.BPC2004.org)

So here we are again at the beginning of a “new” branch year. Please take the time to look through the outline of local events in *Network News*, and plan your attendances now to support your local branch. And, in the spirit of CPD, reflect, plan, act and evaluate!

# Branch programmes, September to December 2004

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society's membership unit has compiled the following provisional programme of branch meetings during the second half of 2004 to help members plan their meeting attendance. The programme does not include social meetings. Members should note that the details of some meeting are still to be finalised. Additional and revised information will appear in the Diary section of

*PJ Online* ([www.pjonline.com/noticeboard](http://www.pjonline.com/noticeboard)) and in *The Pharmaceutical Journal's* weekly Diary column, which gives details of meetings for eight days from the Monday following the publication date of the issue.

Members should also note that they are normally free to attend meetings of any branch and not just the one to which they have been allocated or which they have chosen to join.

## Aberdeen to Clwyd

Branch	Date	Topic
<b>Aberdeen and North Eastern Scottish</b>	29 September	Schizophrenia
	26 October	Alzheimer's and dementia
	24 November	Acute coronary syndrome
	7 December	Hands on at the BRI Centre
<b>Ayrshire</b>	28 September	Continuing professional develop toolkit
	26 October	The Society's Council: What is happening?
<b>Bedfordshire</b>	29 September November	Podiatry pharmacy Sexually transmitted diseases
<b>Birmingham</b>	28 October	Diabetes
	18 November	Medicines management
<b>Bolton</b>	9 September	Oral signs of drug abuse
	8 October	Annual professional dinner
	11 November	Cytochrome 450: involvement in drug interaction
	2 December	New perspectives in herbal medicines
<b>Bradford</b>	14 October	Continuing professional development toolkit
	16 November	Technician registration
<b>Brighton</b>	7 September	Continuing professional development
	12 October	Welcome to new students: history of pharmacy
	9 November	Statins and their use in primary care
	8 December	National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease
<b>Bristol</b>	29 September	Schizophrenia
	26 October	Alzheimer's and dementia
	24 November	Acute coronary syndrome
	7 December	Hands-on at the Simulation Centre
<b>Chelmsford</b>	23 September	Homoeopathy in practice
	19 October	Drug-induced psychoses
	25 November	Contraception: a GP's perspective
<b>Chesterfield</b>	22 September	Anticoagulant therapy (followed by annual general meeting)
	8 December	Resuscitation
<b>Clwyd</b>	22 September	Preregistration welcome and update on pharmacy practice
	19 October	Society's continuing professional development plan and record
	11 November	Drug use in pregnancy and breast feeding
	30 November	Gastrointestinal cancers

## Colchester to Halifax

Branch	Date	Topic
<b>Colchester</b>	10 November	Continuing professional development
<b>Coventry and Warwickshire</b>	Second Tuesday of each month	Topics around paediatrics and childhood care
	6 October 18 November	Osteoporosis management The new pharmacy contract
<b>Croydon</b>	28 September	Coronary heart disease: over-the-counter statins
	19 October	Supplementary prescribing
	30 November	Continuing professional development
<b>Dudley and Stourbridge</b>	7 September	National Patient Safety Agency: Its work and relevance to pharmacy
	15 September	Use of supplementary nutrition for "at risk" patients
	October	Continuing professional development practical session
	1 November 7 December	Role of the physiotherapist Guided tour of new pharmacy department, Russell's Hall Hospital
<b>Durham</b>	21 September	Continuing professional development
	19 October	Health websites/NHSnet
	23 November	<i>to be announced</i>
<b>East Metropolitan</b>	19 October	"Children by choice not by chance" (contraception)
	16 November	Continuing professional development
<b>Edinburgh and Lothians</b>	Mid September	Discussion forum: Society needs of the profession in Scotland
	Mid October	Through the looking glass: How patients see their medicine
<b>Epsom</b>	19 October	Continuing professional development
	25 November	Shipman Inquiry
<b>Glasgow and West of Scotland</b>	11 November	Pharmacist prescribing
<b>Grimsby</b>	21 September	Continuing professional development
<b>Halifax</b>	9 September	"Effective care in an infertility practice"
	14 October	Continuing professional development
	18 November	Medicines management

## Harrow to Leeds

Branch	Date	Topic
<b>Harrow and Hillingdon</b>	21 September	Weight management: a healthier lifestyle
	19 October	Understanding better logical reports:
	23 November	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease today and current innovations
<b>Hastings</b>	3 December	Current developments (by pharmacy standards inspector)
<b>Hereford</b>	September	Continuing professional development
	13 October	CPPE meeting
	10 November	<i>to be announced</i>
<b>Hounslow</b>	4 November	The new pharmacy contract
<b>Hull</b>	14 September	Treatment of Parkinson's disease
	1 October	Continuing professional development for everybody
	11 November	Treatment of epilepsy
<b>Isle of Wight</b>	7 September	Intermediate care
	19 September	Asthma
	October	Technicians meeting: foundations degree and future developments
	November	Ask About Medicines Week
	11 November	Continuing professional development and information technology
18 November	Influencing skills	
<b>Ipswich</b>	8 September	Public health issues: how pharmacist should get involved
	12 October	Pharmacy technicians: Registration and other current issues
	25 November	Continuing professional development: getting started
<b>Jersey</b>	September	Emergency hormonal contraception (CPPE workshop)
	October	<i>To be announced</i>
	November	POM-to-P changes (CPPE workshop)
<b>Lanarkshire</b>	14 October	Devolution and the Society
	11 November	Implications of the Shipman Inquiry
	9 December	The history of pharmacy
<b>Leeds</b>	13 October ( <i>to be confirmed</i> )	Recommended clinical practice for the treatment of obesity
	November	'Reducing coronary risk: background to simvastatin over the counter

## Leicestershire to Portsmouth

Branch	Date	Topic
<b>Leicestershire</b>	14 September	Standard operating procedures
	12 October	Chronic disease management of Parkinson's disease
	9 November	NHS Direct and out-of-hours services
	7 December	The new pharmacy contract, the general medical services contract and pharmacy opportunities
<b>Liverpool</b>	6 October	Reducing coronary risk: background to simvastatin over the counter
<b>Macclesfield</b>	6 October	Better medicine for children
<b>Mansfield</b>	23 September 2 November	Obesity <i>To be announced</i>
<b>Medway</b>	11 October	School of pharmacy 2004: How students are trained to become pharmacists in the 21st century
	19 November	Non-medical prescribing: supplementary prescribing and extended prescribing
<b>Mid Glamorgan East</b>	21 September	Zocor
	19 October	Error reporting: patient safety (WCPPE meeting)
	23 November	Diabetes
<b>Moray and Banff</b>	7 September	Continuing professional development
	12 October	<i>to be announced</i>
	9 November	Technicians
	4 December	<i>to be announced</i>
<b>Northamptonshire</b>	30 September	Registration of technicians and support staff
	3 November	Acute coronary syndrome
<b>Northern Scottish</b>	7 September	Medication review/"Future Branches" roadshow
	5 October	Continuing professional development
	2 November	What's new? (joint meeting with NHS Education for Scotland and SCPPE)
	7 December	Regulation of support staff
<b>Norwich and Norfolk</b>	7 October	Update on Society's structure and roles
	4 November	Risk analysis and medication errors
	1 December	Continuing professional development
<b>Penfro</b>	21 September	The "grandparent clause" and its implications for hospital and community pharmacy
	5 October	Update on new chemotherapy agents, followed by forum meeting
	2 November	First aid for pharmacists, followed by presentation on new pharmacy contract
<b>Portsmouth</b>	6 October	Wound management
	14 October	Continuing professional development

## Sheffield to West Cumberland

Branch	Date	Topic
<b>Sheffield</b>	7 September	Continuing professional development
	5 October	Update on atopic eczema
	3 November	Treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
	8 December	Introduction to neurolinguistic programming
<b>Shropshire</b>	September	Help to quit meeting: discussion around smoking cessation campaign
	October	Coroner issues that affect pharmacists
	November December	POM to P (and on to GSL) Council meeting
<b>Slough</b>	04 October	Using statins to reduce coronary risk
	25 October	Continuing professional development
	15 November	Pharmacy forum
<b>South Cheshire</b>	16 September	Drugs in renal impairment
	21 October	Johnson & Johnson presentation
	16 November	Medicines management: improving relations between people and their medicines
<b>South East Metropolitan</b>	15 September	National programme for information technology and the new pharmacy contract with Enigma
	20 October	Continuing professional development workshop
	17 November	Palliative care
<b>South Staffordshire</b>	14 September	Supplementary prescribing
	17 November	New general medical services contract
<b>South West Metropolitan</b>	21 September	Preregistration trainees welcome reception
	19 October	Hypertension
	16 November	Hyperlipidaemia
<b>Southampton</b>	19 October	Continuing professional development
	November	Dermatology: new developments
<b>Stirling</b>	30 September 9 December	Pharmacist prescribing Communication skills
<b>Sunderland</b>	15 September	Pharmacists prescribing, part I
	October/ November	Continuing professional development
	10 November	Child health, part I
	17 November	Child health, part II
	24 November	Child health, part III
	1 December	Pharmacists prescribing, part II, and medicines management
<b>Weald of Kent</b>	23 September	Ophthalmology
	11 November	The general medical services contract and pharmacy
<b>West Cumberland</b>	6 October	Treatment regimes for HIV/AIDS
	10 November	Chiropody in the NHS

## West Hertfordshire to Worthing

Branch	Date	Topic
<b>West Hertfordshire</b>	21 October	Reducing coronary risk: background to simvastatin over the counter
	25 November	Smoking cessation: nicotine addiction: root of the problem
<b>West Metropolitan</b>	13 October	Preregistration. talk: welcome and introduction to the branch; paediatric medicines
	1 December	Preregistration. talk: community and primary care pharmacy, over-the-counter statins, continuing professional development toolkit
<b>West Surrey</b>	15 September	Men's health
	12 October	Discussion on action plans for Ask About Medicines Week
	9 November	Continuing professional development
	14 December	Nutrition and coeliac disease issues
<b>Wirral</b>	16 September	Expert patients on mental health
	14 October	Children's National Service Framework
	18 November	Drug abuse
<b>Worthing and West Sussex</b>	21 September	Osteoporosis: current developments in prevention and treatment
	25 November	Continuing professional development: so what does it mean for me?

No programme information for the period covered was received from the following branches: Barnet, Bath, Bro Myrddin, Bromley, Buckinghamshire, Burnley, Bury and Rochdale, Cambridge, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan, Central Lancashire, Ceredigion, Cheltenham and Gloucester, Cornish, Derby, Doncaster, Dorset, Dumfries and Galloway, Dundee and Eastern Scottish, East Cumberland, East Kent, Fife, Guernsey, Gwent, Gwynedd, Harrogate, Hertford, Huddersfield, Isle of Man, Lancaster, Lincoln, Manchester, Salford and Trafford, Morgannwg, North East Lancashire, North Hampshire, North Metropolitan, North Staffordshire, Northumbrian, Nottingham, Oxfordshire, Plymouth, Powys, Reading, Scunthorpe (currently linked with Grimsby), Thames Valley, Wigan.

## Regions

Region	Date	Topic
<b>Chiltern</b>	7 October	Post-Shipman: what do pharmacists need to know and do?
	22 or 29 November	Political view of pharmacy
<b>Mersey</b>	22 November	Political view of pharmacy
	14 October	Regional committee meeting
<b>South East England</b>	10 November	Regional committee meeting
<b>Yorkshire</b>	10 October	New trends and treatments in diabetes care

No programme information for this period was received from the following regions: Anglia, Bath and West of England, Border, North Western, Sherwood, Wessex, West Midlands

# Healthy headlines: advice for would-be branch PROs

Turn on your television or radio, buy a newspaper, read a magazine and the likelihood is that a health story will feature strongly. Health scare; health breakthrough; health crisis. If there is one thing the public cannot seem to get enough of, it is news about health.

The Society's public relations (PR) unit works to place pharmacy in the news. During 2004, the Society has been featured in the national media on a wide range of health issues including the POM-to-P switch of statins, the safe use of antibiotics, adverse drug reactions and the availability of drugs on the internet.

Whether creating news or reacting to media enquiries, the PR unit looks to involve the Society's network of branch public relations officers (BPROs) and regional communications officers (RCOs) to give stories a local pharmacy angle or reaction.

Kurt Ramsden, a community pharmacist from Redcar, North Yorkshire, who has been a BPRO for four years, says: "It's good to feel that I'm making a difference and helping to inform public thinking. It certainly makes an interesting change from the day-to-day business of pharmacy."

Mike Burden was a BPRO for more than 10 years and is now regional communications officer for the Sherwood region. "I had a lot of fun as a BPRO," says Mike. "I now see my main role as offering comment, support and advice to BPROs in my area. And I would advise any would-be BPRO to take full advantage of the training and material on offer from the Society's PR unit — it's absolutely first class."

So, what makes a good BPRO? First, it is vital that BPROs establish a strong network of media contacts in the local area. Journalists from local newspapers, radio and television stations need experts whom they can call to provide informed comment on health issues in order to give their stories credibility. Journalists have columns to fill and air time to occupy — and BPROs can make that job easier for them.

It is also important that BPROs create their own contact book of local pharmacists who are prepared to speak to the media. This can be done in conjunction with RCOs and ensures that expert comment from all areas of pharmacy is available.

The Society provides ready-made press material for BPROs to use in their local media. During 2004, the PR unit has generated stories focusing on pharmacists' contribution to a range of health issues including smoking cessation, men's health and antibiotic awareness. The Society also supports BPROs in reacting to news stories by providing ready-made responses and advice. Examples from this year include the *Which?* report, adverse drug reactions and, most recently, the Shipman report. BPROs can also



**Kurt Ramsden: "it's good to feel that I'm making a difference and helping to inform public thinking"**



**Michael Burden: "I see my main role as offering comment, support and advice to BPROs in my area"**

work with the branch committee to create their own local stories and these can be promoted in a number of ways.

- **A news release** is a prepared news story either flagging a forthcoming event, or reporting on something that has already happened. To get an idea of how a release is put together, take a look at some of the releases on the Society's website at [www.rpsgb.org/news](http://www.rpsgb.org/news), which has examples on a wide range of topics. Think visually.

A good photograph will help your chances of publication and perhaps win more space on the page. You might take this yourself, or arrange for a freelance photographer to do the job.

- **A letter to the editor** is a straightforward and convenient way of airing a point on a current issue.
- **Cold calling** is probably the quickest way to get your story out. Simply phone your contacts and offer them the story. If they are interested, they will interview you immediately.

If, on the other hand, you are contacted by the media for information or a reaction to what is perhaps a national story, there are some points to bear in mind. It is not wise to jump straight in with all guns blazing. Note down what sort of information the reporter is after and then say that you'll call him or her back in a few minutes. This will give you time to consider the message you want to put across, and perhaps prepare a few notes. If you are asked to speculate on a matter, it is probably best not to. Remember, the Society's PR unit is always happy to provide guidance.

Mike Burden underlines this: "Often the reporter will press for an immediate answer, saying that his or her deadline is imminent. Refuse to be pressured; just say 'I need half an hour and then I'll call you back'. It's all too easy to be rushed into saying the wrong thing."

Sometimes things can get hectic. Kurt Ramsden recalls the aftermath of the *Which?* magazine survey earlier this year criticising the quality of advice given in some community pharmacies. It was just the sort of controversial story the national media loves.

"The phone didn't stop ringing," says Kurt. "We had a television news camera team in the shop on the day that the report was published to film a report for the BBC *Six O'clock News*, and I fielded interview after interview that week."

"Fortunately, the Society had established an approach and an outline statement in advance for BPROs to use in responding to the report and it all went pretty well."

Would-be BPROs reading *Network News* should not let the thought of appearing in front of TV cameras put them off. In reality most of their exposure to the local media will be to local newspapers and radio stations,

The Society also offers professional media training free to all BPROs. As a BPRO, Kurt Ramsden has been on the training day. He says: "The course gave me a real insight into how the media operates and taught me some valuable tricks of the trade."

For a more in-depth look at what it takes to be a good BPRO, a booklet, "Hitting the headlines", is available from the Society's PR unit (tel 020 7572 2335).

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