

Candidates' priorities for the Society

Tom Moberly asked this year's candidates in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Council election what is the most important thing the Society needs to do in the next 12 months, who should be included in the new professional body and what will make people join it. Here are their answers

1. Priorities for the Society

Ian Mullen The Society must consult the membership on the recommendations of the Clarke Inquiry. Decisions on a professional body cannot be taken in isolation. Having led two large successful NHS consultations, I appreciate the value of obtaining a mandate for change from stakeholders. Work must begin on the financial implications of creating a new professional body.

David Thomson Actively listen and heed what is being said. Think differently and innovatively. Fully engage with key stakeholders and representative groups to elicit views and opinions. Encourage and welcome participation to develop a sense of ownership and shared commitment from the outset. Implement recommendations from Clarke and fully support the work of the transition committee. Use all available formats to provide feedback at every stage to ensure full understanding and awareness on progress. Devolve further resource to national boards and allow each a greater level of autonomy.

Martin Astbury In the next 12 months, while people will be navel-gazing about the future professional body, we must be aware that the world is still turning. Following the responsible pharmacist regulations the Department of Health will consult on changes to supervision. This has the potential to change pharmacy more than anything else has in my lifetime. Wherever I am and whatever I am doing I intend to ensure that grassroots pharmacists will get involved in shaping any changes to supervision.

Mike Holden The profession as a whole needs to drive and reshape the Society as a potential "Royal College" fit for the future. This will require some brave and innovative decisions about organisational structure, process and outcomes. If we keep too much of what we currently have and just change the name, we will simply end up with more of the same; that will do nothing to deliver the required strong leadership and development of our profession at a time when the White Paper and developments in Scotland and Wales have the potential to develop extended role opportunities. The timelines and the timing are challenging; however, we must not ignore the views of the membership, but equally we must not procrastinate nor must we suffer death by consultation or committee, which will probably deliver a camel instead of a thoroughbred horse.

Catherine Duggan Most importantly, the Society needs to further its recent collaborative working, to corral our representative groups and bodies to deliver a new member facing organisation, not maintain the status quo.

Council election 2008: the candidates



Top row (left to right): Martin Astbury, Nick Barber, Catherine Duggan and Mike Holden. Bottom row (left to right): Nanette Kerr, Alison Moore, Ian Mullen and David Thomson.

Nick Barber Say goodbye to itself. It is really important that it pursues transformational change rather than a gentle bifurcation of the existing structure. This will be very difficult for the Society to do. However, if the new leadership body is to thrive, it needs a fundamentally different mindset. A large central body is unlikely to be attractive to members. It needs to think as a new organisation.

Nanette Kerr Both attentive listening and effective, clear speaking must be employed in abundance in the next 12 months to maintain and increase the engagement with the members. In my role I communicate at all levels, from government and directors to pharmacy teams.

Alison Moore Regain the trust and interest of its members. The Society needs to change visibly over the next 12 months. I am pleased to hear that it is reorganising to separate out the regulatory function, which should enable the Society to concentrate on representation. This is important because, until the membership trust the Society to listen to the results of reviews and surveys, they are unlikely to respond to any of them. The Society also needs to take a long, hard look at its finances and be ruthless in reducing costs, as the membership made its feelings clear on that subject last year.

2. Professional body membership

Martin Astbury We must keep the price of joining the new professional body low. The new body must be a lean organisation that appeals to the wider membership and not just pander to the elitist groups who make all the noise. The new professional body should offer services that help pharmacists to stay on the Register. An essential part of this will be sup-

port for completion of the General Pharmaceutical Council's continuing professional development requirements.

Catherine Duggan The new body should comprise the major bodies and groups across all sectors in our profession, including the specialist groups (for example United Kingdom Clinical Pharmacy Association), students, academics, technicians and industrial pharmacists.

David Thomson I see the new professional body as an umbrella organisation comprising all members of the pharmacy family. It presents an opportunity to welcome back the many groups established that have had to function separately as their views and interests may not have adequately represented by the Society in the past. It presents a tremendous opportunity to rebrand and relaunch our representative body providing strong leadership and a unified voice for pharmacy.

Mike Holden I believe we need an overarching body taking overall responsibility for leadership and development of the profession, but with small faculties representing the various disciplines within this.

Ian Mullen The professional body must have an inclusive and intuitive approach. Interested pharmaceutical organisations should have the opportunity to join. Technicians can be included in a clearly defined category. Professional groupings (albeit without firm boundaries) within the new body should reflect areas of practice and special interests. A segment for pharmacists with universally accepted advanced levels of competence is desirable.

Nick Barber I am all for it being an inclusive rather than an exclusive body. All soci-

eties and groups grow stronger and thrive if exposed to new ideas and new ways of thinking. This does not weaken or dilute us; we still have control of our identity through the registration body and our actions. We can only grow stronger from robust debate, refining our identity and roles and strengthening our case to government, patients and other professions.

Nanette Kerr It must include colleagues from all sectors in pharmacy to ensure true representation. There must be a facility for technician membership. There should also be an option for associate membership that would attract partnership involvement of the other major national bodies to create a single powerful voice for pharmacy. The bigger the body, the louder the voice.

Alison Moore Pharmacists. Student and preregistration trainees should be able to join in a reduced capacity, and retired pharmacists should be just as eligible to join as those who are still practising. I wrote as much in my response to the Clarke Inquiry. However, this is my personal view. Far more important are the combined views of all pharmacists. The professional body simply will not exist if no one wishes to join it.

3. What will attract members?

Mike Holden There has to be a value added return on investment of a fee to make membership desirable. The benefits (not features)

of membership should ensure that joining the organisation is a must do for all.

Alison Moore Understanding what the new professional body is going to do and how it will benefit them as individuals. Affordable fees. Being genuinely involved in deciding the above.

Nick Barber The body needs a vision that people want to be part of, and needs to deliver real benefits at an acceptable membership fee. People want a vibrant local culture, forums to support practitioners, inventive educational events, low central costs and a low membership fee.

Nanette Kerr That they are better in it than out of it. Members will see tangible benefits that make a difference to their career in the long run either financially or in terms of status. These must include professional leadership, a clear vision, standards for advanced and specialist practice and a coherent, persuasive voice. All of these activities have formed the bedrock of my career to date.

David Thomson Appealing and attractive if it provides services members want and need, ideally a customer-focused organisation concentrating on the interests of members. Best features will be identified in time but I would be looking for excellence in promoting and advancing the profession, provision of top quality education material and an enhanced level of support for branches, just for starters.

Ian Mullen Pharmacy is a clinical profession and the professional body must demonstrate an understanding of modern clinical practice. It should support clinical developments. Pharmacists will join a body that: demonstrates effective leadership for the profession; successfully represents the profession to Government, the public and the media; emphasises the importance of the profession to the NHS; understands that devolution involves autonomy and governance while relinquishing management; acknowledges the contribution of retired members; and provides added value and genuine value for money.

Catherine Duggan To join, individuals will need a very clear vision that this body is inclusive and unites the profession. A professional body that provides a place for all in pharmacy — from generalist to specialist to advanced practitioner across all sectors; that promotes us widely to the public and effectively at the highest levels of influence; that provides an acknowledged voice of expertise for all levels. We now have an opportunity to develop a new leadership body that would allow us to unite around a common theme — pharmacy.

Martin Astbury There must also be a greatly reduced fee for retired pharmacists. These pharmacists have made enormous contributions to our profession over the years and this must be rewarded.

Advertisement