



guild matters

NEWSLETTER FROM THE GUILD OF HEALTHCARE PHARMACISTS

Welcome to the second edition of *Guild Matters*, the newsletter from the Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists.

Guild Council has had a busy few months as it has tried to ensure that a member has attended all major meetings to discuss the Government White Paper: "Trust assurance and safety: the regulation of health professionals in the 21st century". It held a meeting on 6 July to discuss the situation (see opposite).

The Guild has also produced press releases on the proposed increase in retention fees and the current pay offer. These, and further information on the topics in this newsletter, can be found on the Guild website (www.ghp.org.uk). If you wish to comment on any topic, this can be done through the members' forum of the website .

Guild pushes for better deal

Unite (Amicus), the Guild's parent union, has been involved in lengthy negotiations with the Department of Health to achieve the current pay offer for NHS staff (*The Pharmaceutical Journal* 2007;279:144). Unite is currently undertaking a ballot of its members on this offer.

The end is now in sight for the implementation of Agenda for Change throughout the UK. However, the work undertaken by the Guild on improving terms and conditions for pharmacists is far from over. With the support of Unite, we continue to seek a national recruitment and retention premium (RRP) for pharmacists, address the 2008/09 pay claim, and deal with the outstanding issue of out-of-hours working.

The work on a national RRP focused on bands 6 and 7, where unfilled vacancies and high staff turnover are evident. The report of the NHS pay review body (PRB) for 2007/08 stated: "With regard to pharmacists, we believe that the case for a national RRP warrants proper investigation and have asked the parties . . . to involve our secretariat."

Working with NHS employers and the Office of Manpower Economics to obtain evidence for the PRB, in the past six months the Guild has begun to obtain robust data on the current employment picture. As well as investigating vacancy rates, we have highlighted:

- Annual turnover — a measure of pressure on posts
- Pay drift — in some difficult-to-recruit sites, managers are promoting staff through AfC bands, rather than seeking local RRP payments. Whilst advantageous to the individual, this distorts the pharmacy career structure and undermines the aims of AfC

continued overleaf

Guild updates

Professional body debate

The Guild's National Professional Committee met on 6 July with representatives of the College of Pharmacy Practice, the United Kingdom Clinical Pharmacy Association and the Hospital Pharmacists Group of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. The Society's Head of Corporate Governance, Christine Gray, was in attendance, to discuss some of the issues around setting up a professional body.

Following the meeting, an article was published in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* on 25 August (2007;279:209).

Backlash at fees increase

There has been an outcry from members against the proposed registration fee increase and many members signed the online petition to the Society against the increase.

The consultation runs until early October, and the Guild will be submitting a response on members' behalf. Please send constructive comments via the members' forum on the Guild website by 21 September. The response will be finalised ready for the NPC meeting the following week.

Dates for the diary

Guild Council will be meeting on the following dates:

- 26 September
- 21 November



Joe Gough/Dreamstime.com

Guild in Europe

The work will also include a confidential survey of community pharmacy remuneration packages, to assess differences in levels of pay between pharmacists employed by the NHS and those in the community.

The proposal on unsocial hours is currently out for consultation. The key point is that if hours within the normal 37.5 hour week are worked at unsociable times, they will be supplemented at the following rates, from April 2008:

- 30 per cent for hours worked on a Saturday or on a weekday between 7pm and 7am
- 60 per cent for hours worked on a Sunday or a bank holiday

Discussions regarding on-call are yet to take place, but the Guild supports Unite in protecting the current interim agreements for another four years to allow appropriate discussions.

The final issue encompasses the handling of the PRB recommendation on increasing the base salary. We are disappointed that the implementation of a 2.5 per cent rise has been limited to England. While welcoming the offer of a subsidy for professional fees, we feel it is unfair that this offer is not extended to staff working above band 8a.

We would appreciate hearing any examples of local RRP's being paid or refused, and on what basis. In addition, there is little national data on AfC outcomes. We have the impression that, relative to other staff groups, pharmacists have achieved satisfactory outcomes, often following a review. We would be grateful for updates on either of these issues from our members. Please contact your regional member via the Guild website.

The 37th general assembly of the European Association of Hospital Pharmacists was held on 8–9 June in Tallinn, Estonia.

The EAHP comprises all associations that represent hospital pharmacy across Europe, and Guild members are automatically members of the EAHP.

This year representatives from over 20 countries attended. Key topics included rewriting the statutes of the organisation to facilitate the process of allowing associations from new member countries to join. This year associations from Serbia and Turkey were approved for membership.

Defining "hospital pharmacy" and developing a mission statement for hospital pharmacists (to be raised at the September Guild Council meeting) was also discussed.

Other issues included:

- A proposal that bar codes be present on individual doses of a medicine
- EU consultations on patient information which may lead to direct-to-patient advertising by pharmaceutical companies
- A report on the future role of hospital pharmacists in gene therapy
- Council of Europe report on medicines safety in relation to packaging and labelling
- European Commission directive on professional qualifications and specialisation in hospital pharmacy
- The development and integration of electronic health records across Europe

White Paper working groups relevant to hospital pharmacy

We are all aware of the proposed split of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society into the General Pharmaceutical Council and another body akin to a Royal college. But what of the other changes proposed in the White Paper, and how can we influence what might happen to us?

The Department of Health has set up seven working groups looking at various aspects of the changes. Three of the working groups are of interest to pharmacy:

- **The Non-Medical Revalidation Group** This will affect all practising pharmacists in the future, as the Government is committed to introducing revalidation for all health professionals.
- **The Tackling Concerns Nationally Group** This group is discussing two areas of interest to pharmacy. First, setting up a central list of approved panellists to adjudicate in fitness to practise hearings so that the

adjudication is independent of the investigatory process. (The Guild is recommending that a specialist from the respondent's area of practice should be involved in all stages of the process.) Second is the introduction of the "civil standard of proof" in these hearings. Therefore the respondent would be deemed "guilty" of misconduct on the balance of evidence, rather than "beyond all reasonable doubt". This is already the standard used in pharmacy by the Statutory Committee, but not in all health care professions.

- **The Health of Health Professionals Group** This group will be looking at how support and rehabilitation can be provided for all health professionals when required.

Where comments are requested about the output from the working groups, information will be put on the Guild members' forum.

Joining the Guild

Details about joining the Guild can be obtained from the Unite (Amicus) membership department, telephone 0208-462 7755 / 0845-850 4242, e-mail membershipdepartment@amicustheunion.org. Details can also be found at www.amicustheunion.org.