

Questions for candidates

In accordance with the procedure for the conduct of Council elections, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Council has invited *The Journal* to ask the candidates three questions on matters of topical interest. Voters in the election may wish to read the answers to the questions in conjunction with the candidates' statements of policy before deciding how to vote.

The aim of the Council's invitation is to assist members in making the most informed decision possible when voting by allowing them

to learn the candidates' views on questions of interest to the profession that might arise after they have prepared their statements of policy. *The Journal* is asked to publish the responses as close as possible to the mailing

of the voting papers, so there has been little time for new topics to arise since the March 31 closing date for the receipt of candidates' policy statements. As a consequence, our questions relate to issues that are not

necessarily new but have been raised by members in recent months.

The Council has asked *The Journal* to restrict each response in length to ensure fairness. We have given each of this year's 16 candidates a maximum of 150 words in which to answer all three answers.

The Journal's three questions

- 1. Important issue** What will be the most important issue to affect the profession over the next 12 months and what makes it so important?
- 2. Code of Conduct** Do you intend to sign the Code of Conduct for Council members if you are elected, and what is your reason for signing/not signing?
- 3. Branch meetings** Do you think that Council members should be obliged to speak at branch meetings (other than their own)? How many branch meetings are you willing to speak at in your first year if you are elected?

Gerald Alexander

Important issue Community pharmacy's survival is in the balance. A new contract, together with future decisions on payment for generic drugs, will affect the livelihoods of pharmacists for decades. Pharmacists in other sectors will also be affected. It is vital that Council is supportive of other pharmacy bodies — now and in the future.



Code of Conduct It is indisputable that the integrity of Council members is paramount. I will sign and abide by a Code of Conduct — and meet this obligation — mindful that the general interest of all members of the Society is not compromised, and that my conscience remains clear at all times.

Branch meetings There should be no onerous obligations on Council members to do this — but I will be delighted to speak at as many as is physically possible. However, my decision will be made on a considered judgement that these engagements are not detrimental to myself, or my personal connections.

Roy Carrington

Important issue I believe that the management of the changes in working practices necessary to meet the requirements of the new NHS will be of prime importance. Failure to manage this process properly will prevent pharmacists from making their maximum contribution to health care. The move from a mainly supply service to a patient centred cognitive service will require considered practical and experienced leadership from Council.



Code of Conduct I would sign the Code of Conduct for Council members. I believe that the code ensures frank and open discussion in Council, and allows Council to arrive at agreed outcomes, even if they do not satisfy fully each member of Council. I am fully familiar with such codes of conduct as they are commonplace in business and other professional organisations.

Branch meetings I am surprised at the need to pose this question, as I would expect, if elected, to speak at branch meetings, on invitation, whenever my business diary allowed.

Shaqil Chaudary

Important issue Of the many issues, I believe electronic prescribing will be the biggest to affect the profession over the next year. The NHS wants to see value for money and electronic prescribing will make the inefficient processes involved in supplying medicines to patients more efficient. Ultimately, this will free up pharmacist time, which can be spent on developing our extended roles in health care.



Code of Conduct Yes. In principle, I believe all 11 points of the Code of Conduct are fair and are in place to ensure maximum benefit to our profession by its Council.

Branch meetings It can only be beneficial for Council members to speak at branch meetings. In part this will address the perceived notion that Council members are out of touch with members' views. Attendance by myself will largely depend on the topic of interest and whether I feel I will be able to realistically make a worthwhile contribution by being present.

Sarah Cockbill

Important issue Successful implementation of supplementary prescribing and repeat dispensing must be one of the most important professional issues to be addressed over the next year. We must demonstrate that we can deal competently with this long-awaited opportunity. Should pharmacists fail to do this then professional credibility will be permanently lost.



Code of Conduct The Code of Conduct is circulated to Council candidates with their nomination papers. There should therefore be no misunderstanding about its implications. Anyone who is unhappy about these need not progress their candidature. I shall be signing it if elected.

Branch meetings Of course Council members should be obliged to speak at branch meetings. This is one of the fundamental ways that issues of concern to the membership can be aired and communication improved. I have been a branch speaker for several years and, if elected, should be happy to continue to address any branches who issue an invitation.

Robert Darracott

Important issue The profession's response to the challenge of change within the NHS. With the Government committed to large increases in NHS funding and a quality agenda, pharmacists need responsive leadership that is a persuasive proponent of the need for investment to extract maximum value from the interaction between pharmacists and patients.

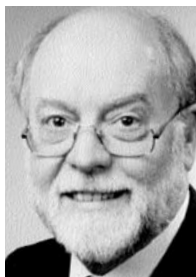


Code of Conduct The Society's Council rightly has a Code of Conduct and all the candidates in this election have been asked for a written undertaking that they will abide by it. What is more important is whether the code supports the proper governance of the Society. This question should be debated annually, and towards the end of the Council year when all members can make a judgement.

Branch meetings Yes, of course they should be. An average of one a month does not seem unreasonable, so if the invitations arrive, count me in for at least a dozen.

William Dawson

Important issue Pharmacists from industry and academia as well as community and the managed service should agree a strategy that will promote pharmacy as central to the integrated health provision that is the patients' and the Government's agenda. All pharmacy organisations must be involved in its creation and implementation and it must include a service related funding model which is the key to adequate resourcing for our membership. The Council must do more to involve the membership in this process.



Code of Conduct I will sign the Code of Conduct if elected and believe it is essential for good corporate governance that all Council members do so. I have seen no convincing arguments against signing such a code.

Branch meetings Each Council member should speak at five or six branch or regional meetings annually and this will ensure that each branch sees at least one Council member each year. I will do this if elected.

Digby Emson

Important issue Billions of additional funds are to be invested in the Health Service. The challenge for the profession will be to ensure that the significant contribution that pharmacy can make, recognised in the Government's pharmacy plan, is accelerated. We have a major role to play in both primary and secondary care, which will require strong and visionary leadership to deliver.



Code of Conduct Council members should be willing to be bound by a reasonable Code of Conduct to ensure business is conducted efficiently, democratically and fairly.

Branch meetings One of the most important roles of a Council member is to understand and represent the views of pharmacists. They also have a responsibility to discuss Council policy with members. Speaking at branch meetings is, therefore, important. I have accepted all the engagements I could, and will continue this policy.

Robert Gartside

Important issue This is the most important year for the Society in half a century. We must get the modernisation right so that the Society becomes more responsive to its members. The need to modify the Charter to accommodate an increased number of lay members on Council also presents the opportunity to modify the Charter so that the Society can look after its members' interests more effectively. We must remember that the members are the profession and that the interests of the members and the interests of the profession are but two sides of the same coin.



Code of Conduct I will of course sign the Code of Conduct. Honesty and collective responsibility are vitally important elements of democracy.

Branch meetings It would be wrong to lay down quotas for Council members' attendance at branch meetings. It would be equally wrong for a Council member to refuse invitations to speak, provided a practical date can be agreed.

Christine Glover

Important issue Modernisation of the Society; it must be fit for purpose. We must have the regulatory and professional sides together to ensure competence and fitness to practise. All health professionals will have to demonstrate this. We need a balanced outward looking Council with good governance, which produces transparent and effective leadership.



Code of Conduct As President I made the Code of Conduct and governance of Council a priority. Everyone must sign the code; in every walk of life common standards of behaviour are essential for good governance. Those who cannot, or will not, or whose loyalties are split, should not stand.

Branch meetings Council members should be willing to speak; however, it can take the best part of two days to travel to and from a venue, and your employment commitments may not allow this. I have always tried to fulfil any requests and will continue to do so.

Gillian Hawsworth

Important issue The whole modernisation agenda. Within this will be the format of the future register. Competency will be paramount and compulsory continuing professional development a key issue. This will have a knock-on effect on the future workforce to deliver the Government's agenda, which is crucial, especially within the new climate of patient safety.



Code of Conduct Yes, as before. It is a corporate governance issue that members of Council behave in a way that ensures the profession and the Society are credible to the Government, other professions and patients, also that the Council itself and hence the Society are fit for purpose as a modern health regulator.

Branch meetings Yes, subject to a minimum and maximum number. The number of meetings members of Council can address is governed by other commitments, such as employment and Council office, so as in previous years, if re-elected, I would only decline any invitation because of the above restrictions.

Pat Hoare

Important issue Modernisation of the profession. It could change fundamentally the Society at Lambeth from being a membership organisation to a government-controlled bureaucracy. The beneficial rights and privileges implied by the concepts of membership and representation could easily disappear under threat of government-imposed changes. We already have robust disciplinary procedures, which have served the public interest well. However, a proposal to increase lay membership of the Infringements Committee will bring our current regulatory process more into line with Governments' requirements. We must ensure, by referendum if necessary, that the membership understands and supports any proposed changes to our Byelaws and Charter.

Code of Conduct Yes. Originally I didn't sign until I had challenged and influenced the corporate governance committee to reconsider and change some aspects of the disciplinary procedure.

Branch meetings Yes. Five or six, depending on location and work commitments as an employee.

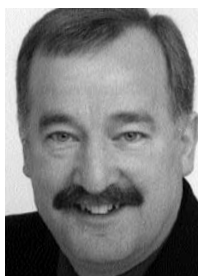


Clive Jackson

Important issue Pharmacist prescribing. This development, while starting small, has the long-term potential to deliver far-reaching changes to the profession's structure and direction. Our approach must encompass both enthusiasm and care, from the outset, so issues that might create inequity and division, across the profession, are addressed proactively to the benefit of all pharmacists.

Code of Conduct Yes. To function effectively, Council must have rules that all members have ownership of. I expect the code to allow effective debate so members can set out considered views when representing the profession they serve. If this is so, and all parties use the code fairly, it should optimise the Society's work. If not, it should be challenged and reformed.

Branch meetings Members should speak with the profession whenever possible. I would hope to speak and listen to pharmacists in at least 10 local meetings per year, including those for branches, the Guild, local pharmaceutical committees and pharmacy development groups.



Hemant Patel

Important issue Effective and creative leadership is the most important issue. Council has no understanding of how to positively promote change within the profession. So, it relies on the "big stick" and "super-spin". Appeal to pharmacists' hearts and minds. Engage them in the change process by releasing creativity, enthusiasm and energy. Any change is possible. We must take account of psychological and organisational barriers to change. The DoH and the pharmacy bodies need to commit to systematic joint action before sustainable and effective change is possible.

Code of Conduct Yes, but I will protect my right to think freely, and be guided by my sense of duty and purpose and be prepared to speak out. My fundamental beliefs reflect the traditional British principles of fairness, justice and a values-based tolerant society.

Branch meetings Yes — my record stands for itself. I also regularly organise meetings to support, motivate and interact with the membership.



Peter Schofield

Important issue The Society's future organisation. Unless we have strong leadership that embraces representation and vigorously promote the interests of the entire profession, the Society will be unable to influence external issues, of which currently the most important is pharmacist prescribing.

Code of Conduct Most of the code is unexceptional and acceptable, but difficulties arise with paragraphs 5 and 10. Unless full Council is the final arbiter of confidentiality, paragraph 5 effectively allows censorship by the officers. Paragraph 10 effectively imposes collective responsibility on individual members, even if elected on a specific issue. The conduct procedure appears not to allow for an independent appeals procedure. It does not allow for a public hearing if requested by the respondent. The respondent is specifically denied speaking legal representation. These issues cast doubt upon the procedure. I therefore would expect these procedures to be extensively debated in open full Council before I make a decision.

Branch meetings Yes, approximately six.



Ashok Soni

Important issue Pharmacist prescribing. Our raison d'être is ensuring safe and appropriate use of medicines. It is anomalous that pharmacists cannot prescribe. The recently published consultation document will redress the balance and will represent a significant step toward positioning pharmacists at the heart of medicines management.

Code of Conduct I subscribe fully to the doctrine of collective responsibility and, while seeing no need to, would sign a Code of Conduct. But I have concerns about paragraph 10 of the existing code, which strikes me as a tool for gagging Council members and not conducive to modern democracy.

Branch meetings Council members will be judged according to their commitment to pharmacy. The membership will expect dialogue with their elected representatives and thus for regular attendance at branch meetings. I will aim to speak at least six per year but do not believe I should be obliged to do so.



Philip Walton

Important issue The most important issue over the next 12 months is undoubtedly the modernisation programme. It is so important because it will determine the way pharmacy will operate for the foreseeable future. The elements of modernisation must all work in unison so that pharmacies are manageable entities operating in a supportive external framework.

Code of Conduct I will sign the Code of Conduct. I do see a need for all those responsible for representing the Society to disseminate the same messages. As a Council member, it would be my job to ensure that I influence what those messages are. The battles in Council chambers should be kept in that place.

Branch meetings Council members should be obliged to network with members in the most efficient manner available. There is potentially limitless demand on the time of Council members therefore prioritisation is necessary. To be drawn on specifics would be unwise.

