

The Society's workforce census: why it is important

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society is about to conduct a census of pharmacists to check the information it already holds and to determine their ethnic origins, current work situation, area of practice, level of education and membership of other health professional registers. This article, produced in the Society's practice research division, explains why it is important for all members to complete and return their census forms

In September, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society will conduct a census of all pharmacists on its register. Results from the census will be important to its work as a professional and regulatory body in the areas of

- 1 Workforce planning
- 1 Education
- 1 Research
- 1 Developing the register
- 1 Implementing race relations legislation

The nature of professional practice in pharmacy is changing rapidly, as are the patterns of work and the careers of many pharmacists. In the light of this, there is a growing need to understand this increasingly complex and dynamic workforce in order to plan effectively for the future of the profession. The census will provide information on the number of pharmacists work-

ing, the hours worked and the areas of practice worked in. The data will be used to describe the current workforce and in subsequent years to analyse trends to inform future planning. The census will provide the foundation for significant areas of future work at the Society in both professional and regulatory areas.

As well as providing an up-to-date picture of the working patterns of pharmacists, the census also offers an opportunity to check the information that is already held by the Society as part of its registration function.

As part of a wider project, the Society is currently reviewing its information requirements and as a result may implement changes. Given the recent emphasis on modernising the regulation of health care professionals, it is likely that the Society will need to collect more information in the future; for example, in relation to mandatory CPD. Before embarking on development work the

Society needs to be confident that the information currently held is accurate.

Furthermore, as a result of changes in the legislation on race relations, public bodies and other organisations need to update the data held on ethnic background.

To meet all these information needs, the Society has revised, redesigned and piloted the data form that is normally circulated to pharmacists with the paperwork concerned with the annual retention fee collection exercise. The revised form will be sent to all pharmacists at the beginning of September.

WHO SHOULD COMPLETE THE FORM?

To provide a complete picture of the pharmacy workforce, it is important that the Society has information about *every* pharmacist whose name is included on the register. Wherever pharmacists work — whether delivering care for patients directly, provid-

Filling in the census form

The form includes a number of different questions, all of which require a simple tick box response or provision of a single piece of information. The form has been extensively piloted so it should be easy to complete. Information is needed in the following areas:

- 1 Personal details
- 1 Ethnic origin
- 1 Current work situation
- 1 Area of practice
- 1 Education
- 1 Membership of other health professional registers

PERSONAL DETAILS

The census form will be preprinted with your registration number. Please check that this is correct and amend if necessary.

The covering letter accompanying the census form will be preprinted with your name and address, and you will be asked several questions about these details. You will be asked to state whether the name printed is that which you routinely use in your workplace and whether the address printed on the covering letter is your personal residential address.

If the name we currently hold is not the name you use in your workplace and you tick the no box, you will be contacted separately

and asked to update formally the Society's records by submission of appropriate documentation. Because the Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists must provide an accurate list of all pharmacists, it is important that you ensure that accurate information has been provided and that you are registered in the name you routinely use at work.

Similarly, the Society needs to hold an address where a pharmacist can be reliably contacted. This should preferably be a personal residential address, but it is recognised that some pharmacists prefer to submit a work address, either because they do not want personal address details in the published register or because they want *The Pharmaceutical Journal* to be delivered to a work address. Pharmacists registering under a work address must ensure that the Society is kept up to date with any change of work address. If the address on the covering letter is not one at which you can be contacted, please inform the registration section at the Society as soon as possible. Please note that the Society will amend addresses that do not correspond with the official United Kingdom postal database.

The Society is currently reviewing a number of issues related to its collection of data including:

- 1 whether to amend the Byelaws so that address details of pharmacists need not

be published in the Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists

- 1 whether to hold two addresses for pharmacists — a personal residential address for registration purposes and a further address chosen by the pharmacist for other purposes, such as mailing of *The Pharmaceutical Journal*

For completeness, this section of the census form also asks for details of your date of birth and gender. These will be checked against the Society's existing records and any discrepancies will be followed up with you.

ETHNIC ORIGIN

Please complete the section on ethnic origin even if you are not currently working or not currently working in pharmacy. The data form requests information about your ethnic background in accordance with the categories used in the recent national census. Because these categories have changed, this section needs to be completed even if you have already provided this information.

CURRENT WORK SITUATION

The form will contain a section that asks about your current work situation. In order to plan effectively for the future, the

The census form

ing technical or advisory services or working in a management or strategic role — the Society needs to understand how much of pharmacists' time contributes to the professional workforce. To ensure that the data set is complete, the Society also needs informa-

tion from pharmacists who work in industry or academia, from those whose work is not directly pharmacy-related and from those who are no longer in employment.

It is important that all pharmacists complete and return the census form so that the Society can produce an accurate picture of the current workforce and undertake research that will inform future policy development.

RETURN OF CENSUS FORMS

The census forms will be sent out in the week beginning 2 September. Completed forms should be returned as soon as possible using the prepaid envelope enclosed with the census form. An analysis of the results will be published in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* following completion of the census.

If you have not received a census form by the end of September, or if you require further

information about the census, please contact Zoe Whittington, Research Manager, Practice Research Division, Royal Pharmaceutical Society, 1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN (e-mail zwhittington@rpsgb.org.uk; tel 020 7572 2276).

Society needs to know how many people currently work in pharmacy and/or plan to work in pharmacy in the future. Please complete this section even if you are not working or not currently working in pharmacy.

AREA OF PRACTICE

The section on area of practice has been updated in order to reflect new and emerging areas of practice and to allow you to record any number of practice areas. The section also asks you to state the amount of time you spend working in any one area. These data will provide a more accurate picture of the total workforce than has previously been possible.

EDUCATION

For some years new entrants to the Register have provided information about which school of pharmacy awarded their degree. The census provides an opportunity to fill in the gap about pharmacists registered before this information was collected routinely.

As the regulatory body, the Society has increasing responsibilities relating to education and training in pharmacy. At this stage, this section of the form simply seeks to elicit information about what

postgraduate qualifications are held by pharmacists.

MEMBERSHIP OF OTHER HEALTH PROFESSIONAL REGISTERS

You will be asked to indicate if you are a member of any other health professional registers and if so which ones, for example, the General Medical Council's register of doctors.

The Council for the Regulation of Health Care Professionals will become operational in April 2003. Its main objective is to promote consistency between the individual bodies that regulate health care professionals. There are a number of health professionals who hold dual registration. It is important to identify such individuals to ensure that any action taken by one body can be readily identified and, if necessary, action taken by the other registering body.

An example of these circumstances was illustrated in a recent case of an individual who had initially qualified as a pharmacist before qualifying as a doctor and then sought to practice pharmacy after action had been taken by the GMC. The professional bodies have agreed that individuals holding registration with more than one professional body should be readily identified by each of the bodies with whom they are registered.