

The official organisation for pharmacy students in the UK — the BPSA — represents students' interests and co-ordinates a variety of social and educational events, as well as obtaining special deals and services for its members. Its president, Andy Christopherson, describes its main activities

Founded in 1942, the BPSA has just celebrated its 60th year as the only national body to represent pharmacy undergraduates and preregistration trainees.

Representing our members at the RPSBG

The BPSA is recognised as the official body for those studying to become pharmacists, and in 1967 the Council of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society accepted a request by the organisation to become an official branch of the Society. The branch status of the BPSA means it has the opportunity to propose motions relating to students at the annual branch representatives' meeting held at Lambeth each year. Student representatives of the BPSA also meet bi-annually with members of the Council and the education division to discuss matters of interest and concern to students and preregistration trainees. The BPSA also has a representative who serves as a

member of the Society's education committee. This allows student input into the important decisions which are made regarding undergraduate and postgraduate pharmacy education and assessment.

. . . Concerned with all aspects of life whether a pharmacy student or preregistration trainee. . .

The BPSA has long been concerned with the education, training, opportunities (social, national and international) and anything else related to pharmacy that affects its members. To help provide and co-ordinate all of the above the organisation is geared around services, events and the provision of information, as well as being a political representative for pharmacy students.

addition to any student's portfolio when it comes time to get that all important first job.

Publications The BPSA provides a range of free publications for its members. These include:

- ▶ *Future Pharmacist*. Published three times a year this provides undergraduates with information on past, present and future events, competitions, career options within the profession and various other topics of interest to students. The publication has recently expanded from six to 12 pages and now contains approved CPD articles in addition to the usual news and student views
- ▶ *Graduate Link*. This is the BPSA publication for preregistration trainees. It contains articles on issues relevant to those approaching qualification, including what career options you have after the exam, changes in the professional role of the pharmacist and information on educational events of interest to preregistration trainees.

Events

The cornerstone of the activities of the BPSA are the educational and social events it provides for its members. The main events are as follows:

Regional conferences These are one- or two-day events, which combine educational presentations of a professional or clinical nature relevant to the practice of pharmacy with an evening social event. This type of conference gives students the opportunity to meet and socialise with their peers from their closest school of pharmacy while also gaining a greater insight into their future role as pharmacists. There are seven conferences throughout the country to which all members are welcome, and previous topics have included careers, alternative medicine, sports medicine, substances of misuse and sexual health.

preregistration trainees — in other words, people just like you! These executive members are responsible for the running of the BPSA and all it offers.

Services

The professional development certificate (PDC) scheme This comes as a result of requests from members (ie, you). The BPSA was asked to provide accredited academic events that were similar to those involved in the continuing professional development process, which all pharmacists must take part in once qualified. The PDC is accredited by one of the profession's leading providers of continuing professional development — the College of Pharmacy Practice. The scheme works on a simple points system and you are eligible for your PDC once five points are achieved in one year. The points can come from:

- ▶ Area conferences
- ▶ The annual conference
- ▶ Credit for learning articles in *The Pharmaceutical Journal* or *Future Pharmacist*
- ▶ Attending local branch meetings
- ▶ BPSA competitions.

The PDC will make an important

Organisation

In every school of pharmacy there is a BPSA representative whose role it is to keep the members informed of all our activities; they also serve as your first point of contact for the BPSA. In each of the four segments we divide the country into there is an area co-ordinator whose job it is to organise events and distribute information to the reps. The areas and their constituent schools are as follows.

Northern:	Aberdeen, Strathclyde, Sunderland
Eastern:	Brighton, King's College London, School of Pharmacy, Portsmouth
Western:	Aston, Bath, Cardiff, Leicester
Pennine:	Bradford, Liverpool, Manchester, Nottingham

The rest of the executive comprises 13 volunteers, including undergraduates and

Annual sports weekend This is the big one, sponsored by Lloydspharmacy. Once a year hundreds of pharmacy students from all schools of pharmacy meet in a sports centre to compete against each other in a range of sports activities including football, netball, badminton, volleyball and even a national man-o-man competition. It may not be a five star hotel, but when there is so much socialising to be done nobody seems to mind sleeping on the sports hall floor. Evening activities include adult bouncy castles, Gladiator Challenge and karaoke. This year the event will be in late October to avoid clashing with exam time in some schools.

Annual conference The BPSA annual conference attracts over 140 pharmacy undergraduates, preregistration trainees and first year qualifieds from all across the land. It provides a forum for debating issues relating to the work of the BPSA, student welfare and the wider profession of pharmacy. A pharmacy careers exhibition is held alongside the conference to give members a unique insight into what is on offer after graduation. This week-long event boasts a formidable social programme, which

includes various sponsored receptions, a charity fundraising pub crawl and the annual ball. The week provides students with the chance to debate their futures, decide on BPSA policy and meet the leaders of the profession in a relaxed environment. The executive committee for the following year is elected at the end of each conference. The next BPSA annual conference is to be held in Cardiff.

BPSA day Introduced in 2000, this is an opportunity for any member unable to attend the annual conference for its duration to get a taster of what is involved. BPSA day is held alongside the annual conference careers exhibition and delegates will also be able to attend a number of workshops. In the past, topics have included patient group directions and even a live acupuncture demonstration on willing volunteers! The whole day is completely free to attend and includes lunch. At the end of the day delegates will be awarded a point towards their PDC certificates.

Graduate events The BPSA organises a preregistration conference, which discusses the exam, careers, working abroad and also what it's like to sit the

exam! In previous years the conference has been held in conjunction with the Pharmacy Live exhibition and the annual general meeting of the Young Pharmacists Group.

International events Members of the BPSA automatically become members of the two bodies representing pharmacy students on an international level — the International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation and the European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA).

The aim of both organisations is to promote co-operation between students from different countries, cultures and backgrounds. IPSF and EPSA both hold annual conferences, which are attended by over 200 students, and recent venues have included Sweden, Malta, El Salvador, Egypt, Hungary and many other far away places, with Singapore and Slovenia being this year's congress hosts for IPSF and EPSA respectively.

The BPSA sends representatives to most international events and is strongly involved in several international projects. The biggest advantage of this is that

members get to participate in a global student exchange programme which provides opportunities to work in over 30 different countries.

Competitions

The BPSA/Johnson&Johnson MSD patient counselling competition Each year the BPSA organises a nationwide competition that gives undergraduates the opportunity to develop their communication skills by counselling patients on the use of prescription medicines in a role play scenario. The event is held in each school of pharmacy with cash prizes for the winners who progress through to regional finals and then on to the national final held at the BPSA annual conference. Entrants are judged by their ability to communicate effectively, rather than their clinical knowledge, thus enabling students from all years to participate fully.

The BPSA/ReckittBenckiser pharmacy student of the year competition This annual competition involves participants completing a multiple choice question paper, which consists of questions set by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, the National Pharmaceutical Association and by the sponsor ReckittBenckiser (UK) Ltd. This is not an examination and entrants are encouraged to use their initiative as to how they acquire the answers. A tiebreaker is included and the six most successful applicants are invited to attend an informal interview in front of a panel of four representatives from the Society, the NPA, BPSA and ReckittBenckiser. All finalists receive a certificate and a Pharmaceutical Press textbook. The winner receives an all expenses paid trip to the IPSF annual congress — a gathering of pharmacy students from all over the world. Congresses have been held in El Salvador, Egypt and Vancouver; while the 2003 annual congress will be held next July in Singapore.

PPLS travel competition This competition in conjunction with Provincial Pharmacy Locum Services is all about

travel, freedom and independence. To enter, members have to send in proposals for a “once in a lifetime trip” with a pharmacy perspective. Entrants can be from groups or individuals, the top three sets of winners receive prizes of £1,000, £600 or £400 towards the trip, and they will be lent a camcorder with which to make a diary of their adventures. A great competition to enter if you want to see the highest pharmacy in Tibet or explore how pharmacy is taught in darkest Peru! Previous winners have travelled to Tanzania, Pakistan and India.

e-BPSA

In a major new development the BPSA has teamed up with Pharmalife (a pharmacy internet portal provider) to bring you the latest in internet and electronic communications. A skeleton of the site has been available for the past year but the BPSA plan to launch a more comprehensive website around September of this year. To check it out and keep an eye on what new go to www.bpsa.com

The site will contain all the latest on events, international activities as well as chat rooms, discussion forums, the latest news and a chance to learn more about the executive and, of course, to e-mail us all!

How to join

If you are not already a BPSA member and would like to join then please contact our membership secretary, Mike Harrison, via the contact details given below. Membership costs £20 for five years (including your preregistration year), or £8 for one year.

BPSA representatives in each school of pharmacy will be able to help you with any enquiries you may have about the various activities and the aims of the association. If you would like to contact any of the executive direct or find out more about a certain topic then go to www.bpsa.com. The BPSA is here to represent student views and provide

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future pharmacists with an opportunity to develop a clearer view of their chosen profession.

Good luck in all your pharmacy related adventures and I hope to see you all at a BPSA event near you! ✂

Pharmacy student diary dates for 2003-04

February	More area conferences in your region
March	61st Annual Conference, Cardiff 2003
April	EPSA congress, Slovenia (www.epsa2003.net).
August	IPSF congress, Singapore (www.ipsf.org).
October	The big one! Annual sports weekend.
November	BPSA competitions start — keep an eye on the notice-board for more details. Area conferences in a number of schools of pharmacy. Preregistration conference.

Contact Details

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