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What is the BPSA?

Founded in 1942, the British Pharmaceutical Students' Association has just entered its 62nd year and is unique as the only national body that represents pharmacy students and preregistration trainees

Elizabeth Doran is president
of the BPSA

Recognised by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society as its official student branch in 1967, the British Pharmaceutical Students' Association is able to represent student views and highlight issues relating to pharmacy students in the United Kingdom at the annual branch representatives' meeting each year. In addition to this, members of the association meet with members of the Society's Council on a bi-annual basis and also sit on the Society's education committee. This allows students to have input into decisions made that affect pharmacy education, training and assessment.

As part of its core aims to provide education, training and opportunities (socially as well as professionally) to its members, the BPSA provides information and organises a number of events and services for its members throughout the year, as well as being a representative of students on a political level.

BPSA representatives

Each school of pharmacy has a BPSA representative who acts as a point of contact for the association, and who also keeps students informed about activities

that will be going on. The country is divided into four sections, and each of these has an area co-ordinator who organises the events and keeps in touch with the reps and universities in that locality. These areas are:

- ▶ Northern — Robert Gordon (Aberdeen), Strathclyde and Sunderland
- ▶ Pennine — Bradford, Manchester, Liverpool John Moores and Nottingham
- ▶ Western — De Montfort (Leicester), Aston, Bath and Cardiff
- ▶ Eastern — University of East Anglia, School of Pharmacy (London), King's College (London), Portsmouth and Brighton

BPSA executive

The area co-ordinators work together with 13 other people to form the BPSA executive, a group of undergraduates and preregistration trainees who volunteer to provide the services and events that the BPSA offers.

Central to the activities of the BPSA are the events provided for its members and, although there has been an increased emphasis on education in recent years (led by student demand), there is also

pharmacy profession and the work of the association itself. This provides students with a forum to discuss their futures, decide official BPSA policy (to be presented to the Society) and meet the leaders of the profession in a relaxed environment.

To complete this, the week also boasts an extensive social programme ranging from official receptions, themed parties and a charity pub crawl to the grand finale of the annual BPSA ball. At the end of the week the membership elect the executive for the next academic year. In 2004, the BPSA's 62nd Annual Conference will be held in Aston. Details can be found on our website (www.bpsa.com) or by contacting the annual conference organisers through conference@bpsa.com.

The BPSA also has an executive member dedicated to the needs of preregistration graduates. If you are a BPSA member, as a preregistration trainee you are covered by a unique free professional indemnity policy provided by the Pharmacy Insurance Agency. In addition, each year we provide a graduate conference which highlights future opportunities and developments, careers, working abroad and, most importantly, tips on how to pass the registration exam.

A free magazine is also distributed to keep graduates informed of BPSA activities and give extra insight into the preregistration year. This is complemented at undergraduate level by the *Future Pharmacist* magazine, which contains professional articles, approved educational exercises and updates on forthcoming association events.

As well as these events, the BPSA runs a number of awards, including the Johnson & Johnson MSD patient counselling competition, the Provincial Pharmacy Locum Services Travel Competition and Reckitt Benckiser student of the year award. Each of these offers financial rewards, as well as being impressive on your CV.

Student exchange programme

By becoming a member of the BPSA, you are also a member of the International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation (IPSF). Together, the two

organisations are able to offer a student exchange programme, where you can spend time working abroad in over 30 countries, experiencing pharmacy on an international scale (see pp34–37).

However, by far the most successful and popular service offered is the Professional Development Certificate (PDC). Established in 2001, PDC is produced in conjunction with the College of Pharmacy Practice as a direct result of members asking for accredited events, similar to the continuing development process carried out by registered pharmacists. The scheme works on a simple point collection system, with five points in one academic year resulting in an official certificate. Points are awarded for involvement in the area conferences, the annual conference, "Credit for learning" exercises in the *Future Pharmacist*, local branch meetings of the Society and BPSA competitions (excluding the PPLS Travel Competition).

If you would like to join the BPSA please contact Michael Edwards, our membership secretary, through membersec@bpsa.com. Five years' membership (including your preregistration period) costs £20, or £8 for one year.

The BPSA is run by students, for students, and aims to provide opportunities for future pharmacists to develop a better view of, and influence, our chosen profession.

Good luck with the rest of your year, I look forward to seeing you at a BPSA event near you! ✂

plenty of opportunity to enjoy the social aspects of pharmacy, too.

Area conferences

Area conferences are one- or two-day events which combine presentations, workshops and discussions on professional or clinical subjects relevant to practice, with an evening social gathering.

Often the topics covered at these conferences are not generally taught as part of the university syllabus, so many students appreciate the opportunity to widen their knowledge of alternative treatments, ethical dilemmas and specific patient-care issues. Over the past two years there have been days dedicated to the medicinal use of cannabis, medical appliances, substance abuse, medicines management, nutrition and alternative career paths.

Annual conference

Over the Easter holiday, one school of pharmacy is lucky enough to play host to the BPSA annual conference. More than 140 members from across the country spend a week debating issues of relevance to student welfare, the