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Pharmacy at the click of a mouse

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The world of pharmacy is made up of many Government, NHS and pharmacy representative bodies, organisations and associations, and just about all of them can be reached online from your computer. Here is an alphabetical guide to many of them, with details of how to contact them if you want to know more.

Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences

An organisation dedicated to the advancement of the pharmaceutical sciences in the UK. Its objectives are to stimulate the development of, and to promote, the pharmaceutical sciences; to promote interaction between the multidisciplinary subjects which constitute the pharmaceutical sciences; and to express the views of pharmaceutical scientists nationally and internationally. Membership is open to all pharmaceutical scientists, both pharmacists and non-pharmacists, who work in academia, industry and elsewhere. Online at: www.coacs.com/aps

Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry

The ABPI is the trade association for about 100 companies in the UK that produce prescription medicines. Its member companies research, develop, manufacture and supply more than 90 per cent of the medicines prescribed through the NHS. The ABPI works with the UK government to ensure the proper regulation of medicines, and negotiates with it

control over the pricing of proprietary prescription medicines exerted through the Pharmaceutical Prices Regulation Scheme. The ABPI regulates the advertising of its members' products through the Prescription Medicines Code of Practice Authority. It also publishes the e-MC (electronic Medicines Compendium, <http://emc.medicines.org.uk/>) which comprises the summaries of product characteristics and patient information leaflets of most prescription medicines marketed in the UK. Online at: www.abpi.org.uk/

British Pharmaceutical Students Association

Full details of this national association for pharmacy students can be found on p40. Online at: www.bpsa.com

British Society for the History of Pharmacy

The society acts as a focus for the development of all areas of the history of pharmacy, from the works of the ancient apothecaries right up to today and the ever changing role of the modern pharmacist. Online at: www.bshp.org/

Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education

The CPPE provides continuing education and continuing professional development opportunities for all community pharmacists in England, and for hospital and other pharmacists doing or intending to do locum work in community pharmacies. It is funded directly by the Department of Health. The CPPE runs over 660 face-to-face courses and workshops every year. There is a comprehensive programme of distance learning and online web-based courses are also becoming available. Each year the CPPE provides more than 38,000 continuing education programmes covering a

comprehensive range of clinical and professional topics. Certificates of successful completion are issued and can be included in CPD portfolios. All courses are provided free of charge and help towards travelling and locum expenses is given for the face-to-face meetings. Preregistration trainees are provided with four of the CPPE's distance learning courses, and are expected to complete them as part of their training. Scotland (www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/pharmacy/), Wales (www.cf.ac.uk/phrmy/WCPPE/pindex.html) and Northern Ireland (www.nicppet.org/) have their own centres. Online at: www.cppe.man.ac.uk/

College of Pharmacy Practice

The CPP was founded in 1981 and is an independent organisation aims to provide postregistration training and CPD for pharmacists from all branches of the profession, and to promote the highest professional standards. It achieves this through a programme of assessments, examinations and practice portfolios, leading to full membership or fellowship of the college. Members are actively encouraged to make a personal voluntary commitment to CPD, and the college provides an annual programme of meetings and courses, guides to developments in pharmacy practice and personal support for members' CPD through local self-help networks. The college is not open to pharmacy undergraduates but has strong links with the British Pharmaceutical Students Association and organises activities for students in collaboration with it. Online at: www.collpharm.org/

Committee on Safety of Medicines

The CSM is a statutory advisory committee set up under the Medicines Act 1968, which advises the MHRA (see below) on the quality, efficacy and safety of medicines in

order to ensure that public health standards are met and maintained. The CSM is consulted by the MHRA on licensing applications for all new medicines, on relicensing and on re-classifications (eg, POM to P). Once marketed, the CSM monitors the safety of medicines in use, and the operation of the Yellow Card reporting scheme for suspected adverse drug reactions is one of the committee's functions. Online at: <http://medicines.mhra.gov.uk/aboutagency/regframework/csm/csmhome.htm>

Company Chemists Association

The CCA is the representative body of the large multiple community pharmacy companies (Asda, Boots, Lloyds, Moss, Safeway, Sainsbury, Superdrug, Tesco), responsible for the running of over 4,000 pharmacies. It is consulted on pharmaceutical issues by the Government and professional bodies, and is represented on the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee (see below), on local pharmaceutical committees and on several national pharmacy professional committees. Online at: www.thecca.org.uk/

Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists

This organisation was originally called the Guild of Hospital Pharmacists, but a few years ago its membership was widened to include all registered UK pharmacists and preregistration trainees working for health authorities, health boards, hospital and primary care trusts. The GHP is a branch of the Amicus trade union, and is involved in negotiating the pay and conditions of its members. The GHP's aims include improving the economic and social well being of its members, enhancing their status and promoting and protecting their interests. It also aims to promote the contribution of hospital pharmacists to the development of pharmaceutical services and pharmacy practice, to contribute to the development of pharmaceutical education, and to contribute to discussions on health care issues. The GHP has a number of special interest groups and about 20 local groups. It covers the entire UK. Online at: www.ghp.org.uk

Institute of Pharmacy Management International

IPMI exists to promote and inspire education, research and excellence in pharmacy management across all sectors of the

profession. The organisation encourages its members to develop their management skills as part of their CPD, and fellowship of the institute can be achieved by submitting a portfolio relating to advanced management practice. IPMI also provides a modular distance learning course in pharmacy management, publishes a quarterly journal for members and holds an annual conference. Online at: www.pharmweb.net/pwmirror/pwg/ipmi/index.html

Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency

This Government agency was formed in April 2003 from the Medicines Control Agency and Medical Devices Agency. Its purpose is to safeguard public health by ensuring that medicines, health care products and medical equipment meet appropriate standards of safety, quality, performance and effectiveness, and are used safely. The merger came about because of the increasing convergence of medicines and medical devices, and it was considered that the new body would provide a seamless service. MHRA activities include the licensing of medicines before marketing and subsequent variations (eg, POM to P), regulating medical devices, regulation of clinical trials, operating the adverse incident reporting system for medical devices, assessment of defective medicines and communicating reports on them and issuing safety warnings, monitoring medicines and acting on safety concerns after they have been marketed, ensuring compliance to standards of pharmaceutical manufacture and wholesaling, setting quality standards for drug substances through the British Pharmacopoeia, and providing advice and guidance on medicines and medical devices. Online at: www.mhra.gov.uk/

The Medicines Partnership

The Task Force on Medicines Partnership is a two-year initiative supported by a £1.3m grant from the Department of Health, aimed at helping patients to achieve maximum benefit from their medication. The Task Force membership includes pharmacists, patients, doctors, nurses, and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry and the NHS. It operates from the Society's headquarters in London. The mission of the Medicines Partnership programme is to achieve greater health benefits for patients and improve patients' satisfaction with the delivery of health care. It hopes to reduce avoidable ill-health

and premature death, and reduce the number of hospital admissions and wastage of medicines. It intends to do this by encouraging greater collaboration and co-operation between health professionals, and by making patients partners in decisions about their treatment and medication. It aims to implement the principles of concordance into medical treatment and prescribing. Online at: www.medicines-partnership.org

National Association of Women Pharmacists

NAWP is an independent organisation that represents women in pharmacy, although its membership is open to men as well. Its mission is to enable all women pharmacists to realise their full potential and raise their profile by being educationally, socially and politically active. NAWP runs educational weekend conferences. Online at: www.nawp.org.uk/

National Institute for Clinical Excellence

NICE is a special health authority set up in 1999 to promote clinical excellence and the effective use of resources within the NHS in England and Wales. It aims to provide patients, health professionals and the public with authoritative, robust and reliable guidance about treatments and care, and to help them to make decisions about health care. NICE produces guidance in three areas of health: technology appraisals, clinical guidelines and interventional procedures. NICE is part of the clinical governance framework introduced by the Government in 1998. The Commission for Health Assessment and Improvement (CHAI) monitors progress in implementing NICE guidance and delivering high-quality health care by local NHS organisations. Online at: www.nice.org.uk (CHAI: www.chi.nhs.uk)

National Patient Safety Agency

The NPSA has been set up as a special health authority to improve the safety in use of medicines and medical treatments. It operates on a "no blame" principle that encourages health staff to report all errors and "near misses" without fear of disciplinary or legal action (except in cases of gross negligence or recklessness). Reports are anonymised and then collated and communicated throughout the NHS so that others will be aware of sources of potential error and will be able to avoid them. Online at: <http://www.npsa.nhs.uk/>

National Pharmaceutical Association

This organisation was founded in 1921 as a result of the “Jenkin Judgement”, which ruled that the Pharmaceutical Society could not provide insurance, business services or negotiate pay and conditions of employment on behalf of its members. The Retail Pharmacists’ Union, as the NPA was originally called, was set up to provide these. Today the organisation provides a range of services and representation for its members, who must be owners of community pharmacies. Membership extends to nearly every independent community pharmacist proprietor and small multiple company, and all the large multiple pharmacy and superstore pharmacy companies with the exception of Boots. Online at: www.npa.co.uk/

National Prescribing Centre

The NPC was set up in 1996 by the Department of Health with the aim of providing evidence-based advice to prescribers and other NHS health professionals to promote high quality, cost-effective prescribing and medicines management. It is perhaps best known for its MeReC (Medicines Research Centre) bulletins and briefings sent out regularly to community pharmacists and GPs, providing information and advice on prescribing in various therapeutic areas. The NPC also provides information and advice on medicines and their use in other ways and to different audiences, delivers a co-ordinated programme of education and training events, disseminates good prescribing practice and helps in the development of IT systems for prescribing. In addition, it keeps NHS organisations and staff up to date with developments in NHS research and development and health technology assessment initiatives. It has also recently provided guidance to pharmacists and nurses training to be supplementary prescribers. Online at: www.npc.co.uk/

Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee

The PSNC is the body that negotiates on behalf of pharmacy contractors in England and Wales with the Department of Health on remuneration and terms of service for NHS pharmaceutical services. The committee has 25 members: 15 are elected by contractors on a regional basis, five are appointed from the Board of the National

Pharmaceutical Association, four are appointed from the Company Chemists Association and there is one representative from the Co-operative Pharmacy Technical Panel (the organisation that represents Co-op pharmacies). Local Pharmaceutical Committees (LPCs) fund the PSNC, represent pharmacies locally and negotiate and discuss pharmacy services with local health bodies such as primary care trusts. The PSNC also operates the National Prescription Research Centre, where a percentage of all prescriptions sent to NHS prescription pricing bureaux are checked to ensure that pharmacy contractors are being correctly paid for what they dispense. Online at: www.psn.org.uk/

In Scotland, the Scottish Pharmaceutical General Council (www.spgc.org.uk/) carries out a similar function to the PSNC.

Proprietary Association of Great Britain

This is the national trade association that represents manufacturers of branded OTC medicines and health supplements. Its mission is to promote responsible consumer health care, and its functions include regulating advertising standards within the industry, liaising with government and lobbying on legislation affecting the industry, and communicating with consumers, in connection with which it provides several consumer services. The Consumer Health Information Centre (CHIC www.chic.org.uk/) is an educational service encouraging self-medication for minor ailments. The PAGB also runs the Health Supplements Information Service (HSIS, www.hsis.org), which aims to dispel some of the myths about health supplementation and encourage sensible use of supplements. A new initiative is Advancing Self Care (ASC), which aims to encourage consumers to take responsibility for their health by promoting informed, expert advice on self-medication and treatment. Online at: www.pagb.com

Primary Care Pharmacists’ Association

The PCPA is open to any pharmacist whose work involves, or who is interested in, primary care prescribing support. Preregistration trainees can also join. The association aims to promote and assist pharmacists as primary care professionals responsible for providing prescribing support and medicines management. Online at: www.pcpa.org.uk/

Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Founded in 1841, the Society is the national professional body for the 45,000 pharmacists registered in Great Britain (see p69) Online at: www.rpsgb.org.uk/

United Kingdom Clinical Pharmacy Association

This organisation was established in 1981 to support and encourage clinical pharmacy. Its membership includes pharmacists from all branches of the profession. The UKCPA organises two symposia each year at which research papers and posters are presented. Online at: www.ukcpa.org

Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London

The “original pharmaceutical society”, this organisation was founded as a craft guild of the City of London in 1617, when the apothecaries (medieval medicines compounders and sellers) broke away from the Grocers’ Company to which they had previously belonged. The majority of apothecaries evolved into medical practitioners and were the forerunners of the modern general practitioner, but a proportion of them stuck to their original occupation and eventually founded the Pharmaceutical Society. Today, the Society has a mainly social function although it runs a number of postgraduate medical diploma courses. About 95 per cent of the membership are medical practitioners, with about 5 per cent pharmacists and a few dentists. Online at: www.apothecaries.org/

Young Pharmacists Group

The YPG is an organisation dedicated to promoting fresh ideas in pharmacy. In spite of its name it is open to pharmacists of all ages. Many of its members have progressed from membership of the BPSA to the YPG on qualifying. It is radical and progressive in outlook and in its 17 years of existence has become an effective and influential lobbying body within the profession. The YPG has an annual conference, regional conferences, a “hustings” meeting at which candidates in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s Council election can outline their policies and several social events including an annual skiing holiday. Online at: www.ypg.info/