

THE BRITISH PHARMACEUTICAL STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION

BPSA

Founded in 1942, the British Pharmaceutical Students' Association has just entered its 63rd year and is unique as the only national body that represents pharmacy students and preregistration trainees. James Wood explains what the BPSA can offer

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James Wood is president of the BPSA

Recognised by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain 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 studying in Great Britain at the Society's annual branch representatives' meeting. In addition to this, members of the BPSA executive meet Council members and senior staff of the Society formally twice a year.

The BPSA is also represented on the Society's education committee and various steering groups overseeing research into the area of pharmacy education. This allows students to have input into the decision-making process and raise issues that affect the future of the profession, and in particular decisions regarding pharmacy education and assessment. It also gives the association a valuable opportunity to learn more about the latest developments at the Society and the wider pharmacy profession.

As well as being a highly effective representative of students at a political level, the BPSA provides the perfect platform for getting the most from your university days, while learning more about the world of pharmacy around you and what the future holds. The BPSA has an impressive range of events and services available to members.

BPSA representatives

Each school of pharmacy has a BPSA representative, who acts as a point of contact for the association (see p???) and who also keeps students informed about future events and activities. The country is divided into four regions, and each of these has an area co-ordinator who organises the events and keeps in touch with the representatives and local universities. 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), Medway campus of the Universities of Greenwich and Kent, University of Kingston, 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.

For more information about the BPSA, visit our all new website at www.bpsa.com

Events

Our events consist of a series of area conferences, an annual conference and a preregistration graduate conference, and we help support the Society student day at the British Pharmaceutical Conference.

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 misuse, medicines management, nutrition and alternative career paths.

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 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.

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 2005, the BPSA's 63rd annual conference will be held in Nottingham. Details can be found on our website (www.bpsa.com) or by contacting the annual conference organisers through conference@bpsa.com.

Services

The BPSA offers a wide range of services, including competitions, a website, undergraduate and preregistration publications, an international pharmacy and student exchange, the Professional Development Certificate scheme and specific services for preregistration trainees. It also has a representative role for its nearly 5,000 members.

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

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

By becoming a member of the BPSA, you automatically become a member of the International Pharmaceutical

Students' Federation (IPSF) and the European Pharmaceutical Students' Association (EPSA). The BPSA, working together with the IPSF, is able to offer a student exchange programme (see p18), where you can spend time working abroad in over any one of 30 countries, experiencing pharmacy on an international scale.

However, by far the most successful and popular service offered is the Professional Development Certificate (PDC). Established in 2001, the PDC is produced in conjunction with the College of Pharmacy Practice as a result of members asking for accredited events, similar to the continuing education process carried out by 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 *Future Pharmacist*, local branch meetings of the Society and BPSA competitions (excluding the PPLS travel competition). The BPSA appointed an educational development officer this year to manage and continue to develop the scheme.

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. If you would like to join the BPSA, please contact Richard Thornton, our membership secretary at membersec@bpsa.com

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



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POPULAR

- Student Exchange Programme
- BPSA Student of the Year Competition
- Exciting Times!
- 63rd Annual Conference

NEWSFLASH

Oops! Our last edition of the gradlink had some information about CPPE that wasn't quite correct. Unfortunately Pre-regs aren't able to order modules