

WELCOME

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Jeremy Holmes Chief Executive and Registrar, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Right now, the pharmacy profession is at a critical turning point. The opportunity is open to us to provide a wider range of clinical services than ever before and leadership of the profession is changing at the same time. The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, the regulatory and leadership body for your chosen profession, is facing monumental changes. The Government's White Paper on the future of healthcare professional regulation, "Trust, assurance and safety — the regulation of health professionals in the 21st century", published in February 2007, sets out the Government's intention to manage pharmacy regulation through a newly created General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and stipulates that the Government also wishes to see the creation of what it describes as a "body akin to a Royal College" to provide leadership for the profession.

It is a credit to the decades of hard work undertaken by the Society that the Department of Health is calling for both the new regulatory and leadership bodies to be formed from its foundations. The Society, rightly, has a reputation for being able to deliver on behalf of our members and the public. We intend to lead and serve you as new pharmacists in a way that provides both practical support and a profile for the profession that wins the respect of policy makers and the public and fulfils the aspirations of our members.

To address the leadership role, the Society's Council has commissioned an independent inquiry into the possible options, undertaken by an independent panel, chaired by Nigel Clarke. The inquiry has been set up to undertake the widest possible debate around the issues relating to a future professional body for pharmacy. Based on that consultation, the inquiry will make recommendations to the Society on how that can be achieved. To follow the inquiry's progress, go to www.theclarkeinquiry.com.

On the regulatory side, the Health and Social Care Bill was introduced into Parliament on 15 November and legislation is currently weaving its way through the parliamentary process. To achieve a Bill that both protects patients and provides clearly defined roles for the many health bodies involved, it is vital for organisations, like ourselves, to participate in the process.

The Society has been engaging with the Government on the strategy for the creation of the two new bodies and activity will escalate over the next few years until the process is complete. We will be advising and guiding the legislators through a veritable minefield of issues which, although familiar to the profession, may not be obvious to parliamentarians. The Society aims to influence the democratic process so that we end up with a healthcare framework that builds upon the profession's outstanding achievements and recognises the important clinical role that pharmacists already fulfil on a daily basis.

Hemant Patel
President, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

So, you've decided to join the ranks of pharmacy professionals in the UK? I, for one, believe there are few more honourable and rewarding career paths to take in life. In the UK there are now 24,800 community pharmacists, 7,500 hospital pharmacists, 1,800 industrial pharmacists, 1,300 in other roles in primary care, 480 academic pharmacists and 150 in wholesale. Whichever area of the profession you choose to eventually follow, we are all ultimately working for the health benefit of the general population.

Currently the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's vision is to make Britain the safest place in the world to take medicines and it continually works to assure competence and fitness to practise. As well as providing controlled entry into the profession and statutory registration, the Society also sets and enforces professional standards and deals with any poor performance and misconduct through its statutory committee procedures.

The Society works tirelessly to promote good practice, providing support for improvement and education. I am also proud to say that the Society's Benevolent Fund is the leading welfare charity for pharmacists, giving financial assistance and support to pharmacists, pharmacy students and their dependants on behalf of the Benevolent Fund Trustees.

In addition to this, the Society is committed to the advancement of science and practice research, education and knowledge in pharmacy and, whenever it can, promotes the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums.

Last October the Society launched the "Pharmacy 2020" consultation that aims to evaluate where the profession will be in the year 2020 and how it will get there. All sectors of the profession are included in the consultation process, including students and preregistration trainees. The Society hopes that Pharmacy 2020 will help the profession to develop quickly by securing a more mainstream role for pharmacy, especially in clinical areas, and elevating members' professional status. You can find information on Pharmacy 2020 at www.rpsgb.org.

You could not have chosen a more challenging or rewarding time to come on board with the profession. We hope you enjoy the rest of your degree and preregistration year and look forward to welcoming you into the profession. Remember, the Society is here to help you, whenever you need it.

