

Readers' letters

Retaining our broad skills

I found two articles published in the May issue of *The British Journal of Clinical Pharmacy* particularly interesting; the head-to-head debate about the public health role of pharmacy (*BJ Clin Pharm* 2009;1:146) and the opinion article by Alexander Florence about maintaining a scientific basis to pharmacy (*BJ Clin Pharm* 2009;1:151).

The emerging theme seems to be that the pharmacy profession needs to retain its broad spectrum of skills and knowledge, and will be all the healthier for it.

Public health is a role that community pharmacists have carried out for many years — the title may be new but the concept certainly is not. I believe that to some degree, primary care trust pharmaceutical advisors also deliver public health indirectly, since the correct promotion and use of medicines has an impact on public health (for example, the impact of over-prescribing antibiotics on the prevalence of meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* and resistant chest infections).

I suspect that, when counselling patients, most cardiology pharmacists will reiterate the importance of lifestyle changes in concert with compliance with the medicines treatment regimen, and I'm sure that hospital pharmacists in other clinical disciplines routinely give similar advice.

I am also one who values the chemistry of medicines, since all medicines have a chemical basis whether natural or synthetic in origin. Chemistry and other sciences are vital to pharmacology, but also to the pharmacodynamics of absorption and physiological distribution, as well as the pharmaceutics of formulation.

I think it is sad that the schools of pharmacy seem to be promoting the practice of purely 'clinical' pharmacy as the only role future pharmacists should pursue and deliver. If this trend continues, who will manage the pharmacies? Who will provide a pharmacist's view to quality control? And who will be able to properly explain to doctors, nurses and patients the reasons why certain medicines should be taken with food and others without?

I believe that there is plenty of room for pharmacists to focus their practice (some as experts) on every variant of their training. The trick is to recognise the synergy of the team and not just focus on the individual.

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Letters about issues affecting clinical pharmacists or commenting on any articles published in *The British Journal of Clinical Pharmacy* can be e-mailed to hannah.pike@healthpublishing.co.uk.

Supporting local practice forums

In the April issue of *The British Journal of Clinical Pharmacy*, Philip Brown wrote an interesting opinion article in which he highlights the importance of local practice forums (LPFs) (2009;1:125).

Dr Brown points out that LPFs will be key to the pharmacy profession becoming 'clinical'. He says that collaborative efforts, incorporating all sectors of the pharmacy community, will provide a solution to the delivery of healthcare to patients, in line with the recent pharmacy White Paper.

Dr Brown uses the work of the West Yorkshire LPF to illustrate how we must harness intellectual capacity from across the profession to arrive at our clinical destination.

Anyone who attended the recent joint national conference held by the UK Clinical Pharmacy Association and the Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists can be in no doubt that hospital pharmacists are essential to the success of LPFs.

LPFs enable pharmacists from across the sectors to network and share best practice, providing local support for the new professional leadership body. It is clear that LPFs will be delivering more than is achieved by the current branch structure of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, and they will inject energy into the profession.

The West Yorkshire LPF is driving forward new ideas and action based on the following core activities: support for education, CPD and revalidation; local leadership; practice research; sharing best practice; networking; and mentoring. Collaboration is essential to the success of LPFs, and the experience of local hospital pharmacists is invaluable.

If you are not already involved, I suggest that you find out what is happening locally and put yourself forward to help to shape the future of your profession. Indeed, some readers who possess leadership skills may turn out to be the best people to set up new LPFs.

The first step is to visit the new website of the professional leadership body (www.pharmacyplb.com) and make your commitment to pharmacy in whichever way suits you best.

Your LPF needs you!

Gill Hawksworth
West Yorkshire LPF facilitator