



The Independent Inquiry into a Professional Body for Pharmacy

Edinburgh - Public Meeting

09 January 2008

5.00 - 8.00pm

KEY POINTS RAISED

Following are details of opinions expressed at the public meeting, some of which are contradictory. These views in no way reflect any conclusions but may assist in continuing to develop the debate.

New Professional Body

- There should be a fresh start.
- Trust, belief and ability in what is currently the professional body does not deliver what will be needed going forward.
- At the moment the RPSGB is seen as very remote, especially to anyone outside the M25.
- But the new professional body needs to build on the foundations of what is there even if the structure is radically changed.
- The profession needs to look for a robust footing that can be built into a strong advocate of the profession rather than jumping into what is already there.
- The new professional body needs a strong, clear voice. What is it going to say?
- The new professional body needs to operate a bottom up approach.
- The new professional body needs to add value.
- It must be customer facing, the RPSGB hasn't had to be.
- The new professional body must elevate things above the common denominator as they are seen by the regulator.



- The new professional body will be a body for pharmacy by taking into account the public perspective.
- Pharmacy needs one single body with room to accommodate all special interests but it is primarily a body for pharmacists.
- The new professional body must be independent and impartial. One of the hardest things in separating the regulator and the professional body is fully understanding who has what role.
- The new professional body needs to understand the views of the troops in the front line. If membership is optional, what will encourage them to pay voluntarily?

Having No Professional Body

- Not having a professional body would be bad for the profession.
- Historically, the body was set up to regulate and represent. Will the new regulator do everything that the original professional body was set up for? The answer is no, the profession needs a professional body to cover things that GPhC will not.
- A professional body is required because you cannot call yourself a professional person if there is no professional body to oversee that profession.

Functions of a Professional Body

- The current Society provides some of the roles and functions that a professional body should, but not all.
- A professional body is required for strategic leadership, clinical leadership and pharmacy practice.
- A professional body is required; it represents the profession and helps inform public policy.



- In order to assist government the professional body needs to influence opinion.
- The vast majority of pharmacists on the register are community pharmacists.
- By the time a pharmacist is at the pre-reg stage, they are focusing on their exam. The professional body needs to support the vast majority of pharmacists to remain on the register and ensure they are fit for purpose.
- The professional body must support the pharmacist to do their job and stay on the register in order to get people to join voluntarily. The regulator won't do this.
- The regulator must be a lean body and the professional body strong.
- Too strong a regulator could take the profession in the wrong direction.
- If a pharmacist is not in employment, for whatever reason, for say a year, they will find it very difficult to catch up on what they have missed being out of the loop. There is a place for the professional body to fill the gaps. The professional body should be providing support services to all pharmacists, including those who go away and come back.
- The professional body should not provide individual advice. That is the role of a trade union.
- The professional body should provide advice on issues relating to professional practice.
- If joining the professional body is voluntary and you have to pay, then you would want some sort of trade union function.
 - If you had issues with the regulator you would want to be able to turn to the professional body.



- It is about how you deliver the services expected of you. There are currently an enormous number of organisations that deliver these services.
- A professional body should provide a trade union function, an education function and it should represent the profession.
- If these functions are broken up into different organisations, people would pick and choose which one they join.
- The RPSGB initially did not support the pharmacist contract because it was not supportive of pharmacists prescribing. The profession drove this.
- Deciding what the profession can do should be the responsibility of the professional body on the basis of what its membership decides.
- The professional body needs to look what an advance in specialist practice means for the profession and the public.
- The professional body should support specialities and stimulate and provide a forum for debate amongst profession.
- If it is to be financially viable then the professional body will need a wide appeal. There should be no elitism. Specialities are important, but they have to be dealt with in a certain way.

Scotland and Devolution

- Devolution is here to stay.
- In Scotland the devolved government has made a big difference to health care and education.
- The new professional body needs to reflect devolution.
- The anti-RPSGB feeling is intensified in Scotland because it is felt that the RPSGB does not properly represent the Scottish perspective.
- Need the professional body to represent at the highest level of health policy.



- Within the Scottish parliament there is cross-party support for greater autonomy in Scotland.
- If the professional body wants to represent and do the best job for Scotland then it needs to recognise the challenges Scotland has.
- The body in Scotland does not necessarily have to be separatist, but it needs more support. It cannot be controlled by a separatist body in London.
- The support needs to come in the form of
 - Facilities
 - Ability
 - Wherewithal

This partly comes from bricks and mortar, partly from the right people in the right place and partly from engagement with people.

- Scotland should be based on collaboration with whatever body exists in England, not on sectorial interests.
- The SNP envisages consultant pharmacist posts, but what will be the role of the consultant pharmacist and how will this work?
- In the last five to six years there has been an increasing divergence in pharmacy practice. This provokes specific problems for Scotland.
 - The London centre of the professional body is one of those challenges.
- Recognising those differences throws up challenges for the regulator and the professional body.
- The new professional body must take due cognisance of the different model that exists in Scotland.
- There needs to be a base for the new professional body and the new regulator in Scotland in order for them to work together and work with Scotland effectively.



- The new professional body will also need to keep an eye on the Scottish parliament in order to react effectively.
- The professional body needs a house in Scotland with the appropriate resource to respond.
- The current contract in Scotland was developed without any input from the professional body.
- The reason the RPSGB Scotland office had little to do with the current contract is because they are shackled by Lambeth.
- Scotland is making more progress with sorting out the issues between the trade and the profession.
- As the Scottish Executive gets more autonomous, the differences in the profession and decisions on health policy are going to grow further apart.

Current Gaps

- The RPSGB is a good regulator but a less good professional body. This is an opportunity to fill those gaps.
- The RPSGB has gone wrong by being an effective regulator but not an effective professional leadership body. How will it help members meet regulatory requirements?
- What is currently missing is helping people develop their careers. There is not an effective network within the RPSGB on the professional body side.
- Recently pharmacists have felt that there is nobody to lead them.
- A new professional body has to have a role for the employee pharmacist - they do not currently have a voice.



The Board

- The board structure is not right as long as it sits under an English body.

Structure and Governance

- There should be sectors.
- Each sector should be autonomous.
- Scotland should be an individual and equal sector to England.
- Each sector should be represented in the governing body.
- This governing body should not decide policy.
- The current structures cannot deliver for the future. It needs to be enhanced in order to deliver.
- The body in Scotland does not necessarily have to be separatist, it needs more support. It cannot be controlled by a separatist body in London.
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- Members of the new professional body should be part of all sectors. Practising in one but interested in all. People should not be kept in boxes; they should be part of the whole picture.
- The current view is of exclusive, sectorial groups. The new professional body must get away from this.
- The physicists tackled groups by having a regional structure and groups within that.



- Grouping people by specialisation is divisive, but it is important to talk to others in your specialist field.
- GPhC will be focused on clinical practice. The Institute of Pharmacy Management has a lot of members who are not in clinical practice. What would happen to them if members of the new professional body are forced into groupings like hospital, community etc.
- There needs to be a broader view than just patient focus.

Membership

- Technicians and scientists should be included; everyone is working together for the same common good.
- It should be mainly made up of pharmacists but with the opportunity for affiliations. It is a small profession and the new body needs to look at financial viability.
- Technicians should be affiliated members. They are required in the organisation to help collaboration but without making pharmacists feel disenfranchised.
- Students should be included as they are the pharmacists of the future.
- Inclusion of pre-registration pharmacists in the membership is necessary to ensure viability.
- There are advantages to students as members. Currently they can do things that are not in the professional interest.
- Including students in the membership will enable the professional body to make students aware of the scope within particular avenues of pharmacy practice.
- The professional body needs to make you proud to be a member, something which sets you apart.



Accreditation, CPD and Standards

- The professional body must provide CPD but it must recognise that it is not only the provider.
- There is scope for NHS Education for Scotland to work with the new professional body in Scotland.
- There is an opportunity for the professional body to provide accreditation. It needs to do this in a way that is seen as transparent and value for money for its members.
- CPD is about raising standards. The new professional body must be aspirational beyond what the regulator can provide.
- The role of the professional body is helping people further their skills.
- There is a quick pace of change in pharmacy. You have to keep on top of things to deliver the right medicine strategy.
- There is a conflict between being a provider and an accreditor of CPD. However, the universities do it. But the universities are not autonomous accreditors; they are doing so under the QAA. A professional body that provides and accredits might be seen to be biased.
- The NHS is a good supplier of education for its pharmacists, as are the employers. But there is a small group of the profession, the independents, who are not given access to education. The professional body should provide courses for where there are gaps.
- The professional body should not necessarily provide education but it should identify and rectify the gap in education.
- There needs to be a mechanism for problems that arise being fed back to the profession, perhaps through the professional body, to try and ensure they are not repeated.



- Pharmacists would join the professional body if it helped them stay on the register.

Revalidation

- When a pharmacist wants to ensure revalidation, they should be able to turn to the professional body for support in that.
- There should be peer support to help ensure revalidation also.

Member Services

- There is potential for commercial exploitation by the new professional body.
- Indemnity insurance could be provided by the professional body.
- Other professional bodies provide discounts for their members. If you spend money on a professional body there is potential for the professional body to give discounts. It should not directly provide the service, but give discounts for other providers. This could encourage people to join.

International

- There are two European forums already
 - PGEU
 - Alliance Boots European Pharmacy Group
- Therefore there is already the opportunity for pharmacy practitioners in different countries to share their experience.
- The new professional body will need to keep an eye on Brussels to ensure any European legislation is taken into account.
- In New Zealand there are c. 4,000 registered pharmacists. Their professional body is viable and independent. However, there is only



one regulator in New Zealand, which reduces the costs making the professional body more financially viable.

- There is potential for the body to offer international qualifications, develop courses that can be sold.
- The scope and idea of international membership is good.

Communications

- Any new professional body will need an efficient and effective communications department.

Relationship Between any New Professional Body and the Regulator

- The pre-reg exam should be set by the professional body. The pharmacist would then register with the regulator after that.

Students

- Students do not see the current Society as part of their life.
- Students do four years of study and they know the Society is important for their pre-reg year, but they don't feel the Society is there for them as they go the degree course.
- Exam setting might be a useful way of cohesion.

The Name of a Professional Body

- "Royal" is important for public interest and patient safety. It implies a certain standard for the professional body's way of doing things.
- "Royal" is useful for status and perception.
- "Royal" sets pharmacy apart.
- "Royal" is more than kite marking; pharmacists have already reached a certain standard. The name is about promoting pharmacy to the public and across the board.



- The “royal” is new for pharmacy in terms of the professional body (twenty years, 1988) and it worked well for a considerable period of time without it. It is the charter that is important.
- “Royal” does not do anything in terms of status with the public.
- “Royal” is influential in the media and in relation to other professions it is important.

Academies

- Inclusion of the Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences in a new professional body was suggested in the Carer Report. The Academy is mainly about research and money and not convinced its inclusion is the model for the future.
- There needs to be better support for teaching; increasingly pharmacy practitioners are teaching.
- The Academy of Pharmaceutical Science represents teaching and research; there is scope to develop what exists.
- The inclusion of an Academy of Pharmacy Practice is a positive suggestion.
 - It could represent all specialists.
 - It could have a generalist approach to practice.
 - This prevents the professional body getting diluted by too many individual groups of specialists.

Publications

- These are important. They get people talking to each other.
- Publications are important to the financial viability of a professional body.
- The publications section of the profession should be nothing to do with the regulator.



- One of the roles of the leadership body is to have a publication where pharmacy can go to find out about pharmacy so individuals do not have to subscribe to other journals.

Transition Period

- If the new professional body started from a clean slate, it would be very difficult to build something new and viable in two years.

Promotion and Profile

- Public perception of what pharmacy does is not clear.
- Needs to be better internal promotion of the profession.
- Whatever the new body is, it should have a strong, clear voice - ONE voice.

Government

- The professional body should be able to work out within the profession what it wants to do and then should take this to government to represent its wishes.

Prescribing

- Pharmacists are the best trained for prescribing, better trained for it than GPs.
- If the new professional body does not take the opportunity to promote this, there is a danger it could move away from the pharmacists.
- Just under 600 pharmacists in Scotland are qualified prescribers. This number is similar in England but Scotland is 1/10 of the size.
- In Scotland the majority of these prescribers are in community; in England this is the other way round.



- In Scotland actually all community pharmacy practitioners prescribe. They may not be registered but the number prescribing is more like 2,000. They have had limited input on this form the Society.