



Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society
of Great Britain

The
Pharmacy
Practice
Research
Trust



News release

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SOCIETY VOWS TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF PHARMACISTS AFTER SYMPOSIUM

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society has vowed to step up its campaign to have dispensing errors decriminalised as part of a raft of key initiatives to improve the working conditions of pharmacists, President Steve Churton announced today.

The commitment is one of the key outcomes to emerge at the conclusion of the intensive two-day symposium to combat work-related issues in the profession, *Workload pressure and the pharmacy workforce: supporting professionals and protecting the public*.

Steve Churton said: "The decriminalisation of dispensing errors is a key change we are committed to fighting for. To my mind, the law as it stands is not only unfair, it is outdated and does not reflect the nature our modern profession."

The symposium, jointly held with the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust on 28 and 29 April, was a cornerstone of the Society's *Workplace Pressure* campaign, which was launched in January. The campaign aims to address workload and stress issues affecting the profession.

Pharmacy Practice Research Trust Director, Sue Ambler said: "There are many stakeholders involved in these issues who can all play a part to improve the situation; the regulator, the professional body, trade unions and employers. Pharmacists themselves, however, also need to take personal responsibility for managing their workload and their own health as part of developing aspects of professionalism."

Steve Churton said: "When I started this campaign, I could not have foreseen the extent of the reaction from within the profession, which emphatically

confirmed my view that there were problems with pharmacists' workloads and the expectations placed on them. Judging by the hundreds of emails I have received on the subject, I think the campaign has touched a nerve in the profession and I am pleased to see we are addressing issues which have wide-reaching ramifications."

The Society also voiced its commitment to take a firm line on the enforcement of rest breaks for pharmacists, in addition to putting in place measures to make working life easier for responsible pharmacists and locums.

Steve Churton said: "Staff rest breaks and the support of well trained colleagues at adequate levels are two of the key issues which we know we can work to improve. I will be looking at how best we can take this forward and I can promise the profession these issues are upper-most in my mind."

The Pharmacists' Defence Association's Director and presenter at the symposium, John Murphy said: "There needs to be a cultural shift among pharmacists and employers, so taking breaks becomes a must. Cultural change requires strong leadership and direction to ensure change is driven to the very heart of an organisation."

The symposium, conducted under the Chatham House Rule in order to engender free and frank discussion, drew together leaders from throughout the profession. Representatives from trade unions, employee groups, academia and hospital pharmacy, in addition to pharmacy superintendents and pharmacy technicians were presented with leading-edge research regarding the pharmacy workforce over the two-day event. Attendees also participated in workshops in order to devise practical solutions to work-related pressure and stress issues.

Sue Ambler said: "The fact that representatives from all key stakeholder groups came together for two days and invested time and effort to think about the findings from research, and to plan a programme of joint work to address this growing problem, is a huge step forward."

Steve Churton said: "I have been encouraged by the past two days and I think there is a sense of optimism that, if the profession works together, we can make real, tangible improvements. We need to keep this momentum going."

Ends

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Notes to editors

1. *Workload pressure and the pharmacy workforce: supporting professionals and protecting the public* was held at Founders' Hall, Clerkenwell.

2. Photo attached shows: (From left) Society President Steve Churton and Chair of the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust (PPRT), Marshall Davies, at the symposium.

3. Further information and quotes for publication may be obtained regarding the following symposium presenters by contacting PPRT PR consultant Bonnie Green on 07 774 650 391.

- Professor Karen Hassell, from the University of Manchester's Centre for Pharmacy Workforce Studies, who spoke on the key factors contributing to pharmacists' stress and increased workload, including rising prescription numbers and additional work generated by the contractual framework for community pharmacy;
- Dr Phil Tucker, of the University of Swansea's Department of Psychology, who outlined the impact of shift systems and working long hours on the wellbeing of a workforce;
- Professor David Guest, from King's College London, who discussed workforce studies showing pharmacists' stress levels were rising higher than the national average;
- Dr Lynette James, from King's College London's Pharmaceutical Science Research Division, who spoke on the impact of automation, distractions and stress on the number of near misses in the dispensary;
- Susan Sanders, from the NHS Pharmacy Education and Development Committee, who addressed the issues of recruitment and retention of staff in hospital pharmacy; and
- Professor Christine Bond of the University of Aberdeen's Department of General Practice and Primary Care, who reported on findings of the national evaluation of the community pharmacy contract and the impact of its introduction on workload pressure and stress.

3. The Pharmacy Practice Research Trust

The Pharmacy Practice Research Trust was established by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of GB in July 1999 as an independent research charity with a broad objective to promote and develop the field of

pharmacy practice research. Its trustees are drawn from senior health policy makers, leading academics, industry and retailers.

The Trust has invested over £1.5m in research; 30% supporting capacity building in pharmacy practice research and 70% on commissioned research. Annual grants from the Pharmaceutical Trust for Education and Charitable Objectives and the Leverhulme Trades Charities Trust contribute to the funds of the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust. For further information and to access reports of Trust commissioned research go to: www.pprrt.org.uk