

Press Release

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Management of prescribed medicines can put patients at risk Practice Research Award winner describes work to improve patient care

“Drug related morbidity represents a substantial burden on limited healthcare resources and it is the complex system in which medicines are prescribed that can create risk for patients” said Dr Darren Ashcroft in his keynote lecture as the winner of the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust (the Trust) 2009 Practice Research Award at the British Pharmaceutical Conference today.

“In practice, “he said, “medication problems are often not pharmacological but rather the results of failures in the medicines management system to provide the right drug for the right diagnosis to the right patient in the right way.”

Dr Ashcroft, Reader in Medicines Usage and Safety, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science at the University of Manchester described his research programme which over the last 10 years has looked into medicines usage and safety. He has recently completed the largest and most definitive study of prescribing errors in hospital patients across the North West of England which has provided robust evidence for the role of hospital pharmacists acting as a ‘safety net’ within current medicines management arrangements. The UK General Medical Council is currently using the findings to inform a review of educational standards for medical students.

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Dr Ashcroft went on to describe his research which has focussed on quality and safety in the community setting. This has shown that when adverse incidents occur in community pharmacies, the prevailing safety culture in the organisation is a key influence on the way in which they are handled. As a consequence, existing reporting systems designed to support organisational learning from adverse events are likely to provide an incomplete picture of the extent and nature of errors in community pharmacy.

As a result of this work, he has developed the Manchester Patient Safety Assessment Framework (MaPSAF), an assessment tool which allows staff to assess the strengths and weaknesses of patient safety culture within their pharmacy and identify areas for improvement. This tool is now promoted for use in community pharmacy by the National Patient Safety Agency. Subsequently, the first ever safety climate tool designed specifically for use in pharmacy settings has also been developed and benchmarking work using this tool involving research collaborations throughout Europe is now underway

The BPC Practice Research Award is presented annually by the Trust to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the field of pharmacy practice research and has the potential to become a leader in their field. Dr Ashcroft, Reader in Medicines Usage and Safety at the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Science, University of Manchester received the award in recognition of his work into medicines usage and in particular quality and safety.

Dr Ashcroft said: "Being told that I had won this award means a lot to me. I have been undertaking a programme of research in this area over the last 10 years or so. Improving quality and patient safety within healthcare is an international priority and this award recognises my work in the UK and its development into a wider European context."

Trust chairman, Marshall Davies, who presented the award at practice@BPC2009 said: "Dr Ashcroft's research including the evidence base built up from work across the country and subsequent developments in Europe is contributing significantly to patient safety. This recognition of his work reflects well the Trust's objective of promoting and developing the field of pharmacy practice research."

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Notes to editors:

1. The winner of the BPC Practice Research Award receives a cheque for £1,000.
For details of the Award application and judging criteria go to: <http://www.healthlinks-events-bpc2009.co.uk/pa.htm>

2. The Pharmacy Practice Research Trust

The Pharmacy Practice Research Trust (the 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. The Trust receives financial support from the Pharmaceutical Trust for Education and Charitable Objectives, the Leverhulme Trade Charities Trust and the Galen Trust, as well as a gift in kind from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. For further information and to access reports of Trust commissioned research or for funding/grant opportunities go to: www.pprt.org.uk

3. **The British Pharmaceutical Conference** is the flagship annual event of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain.

It takes place in Manchester from Sunday 6 September - Wednesday 9 September. Up to 1000 pharmacists from the UK and all over the world will convene to debate practice and scientific developments affecting the profession during the four day event. For further information go to: <http://www.healthlinks-events-bpc2009.co.uk>

Research released at BPC is published in the Journal of Pharmacy and Pharmacology (JPP) and International Journal of Pharmacy Practice (IJPP).