

Introduction

In November 2008, the Pharmacy Practice Research Trust (the Trust) brought together key stakeholders from all sectors of pharmacy, employers and policy makers, including the Chief Pharmaceutical Officers from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, to a research summit to discuss the future of pharmacy practice research across the UK.

Earlier last year, the 2008 Department of Health White Paper for pharmacy, *Pharmacy in England: Building on strengths – delivering the future*, whilst stating that pharmacists should be involved in the delivery of a wider array of services, also clearly indicated that research underpinning both clinical and commissioning decisions needs to be strengthened.

In the Trust's view, pharmacy practice research has come some way over the last 10 years and some highly influential research has been undertaken in all four nations. However, in general the research is largely small scale and exploratory in nature, due in part to a comparatively small research workforce and a shortage of academic and research pharmacists with PhDs.

The research summit considered five key areas for priority setting:

- Long Term Conditions;
- Public Health;
- Minor Ailments/Self Care;
- Integrating Research Into Practice; and,
- Integrating Evidence Into Practice.

The outputs and recommendations from these discussions form the basis of a strategic direction for pharmacy practice research that the Trust is proposing. The Trust recommends that:

Governments consider:

- investing in the pharmacy workforce, research priorities* and infrastructure needed to produce high quality research – in the region of £15 - £20 million over five years.
- funding, at least in part, for priority research areas in long term conditions, public health and minor ailments across all four nations to underpin the aspirations of national policies.
- increasing research capacity efforts by the return of a research fellowship scheme, akin to the Department of Health's Pharmacy Practice Research Enterprise Scheme, which offers flexible/part-time academic clinical fellowships.

Academia considers:

- strengthening the collaborative nature of research to meet the needs of the wider health agenda.
- strengthening links with pharmacy practice, facilitated via "Local Research Champions".

Employers consider:

- recognising and supporting research and development as part of a pharmacist's role.
- investing in research that seeks to investigate existing professional practice and advance the profession.

Pharmacy leaders consider:

- engaging with other health professionals to identify collaborative research priorities;
- developing a "Centre of Excellence" to identify good practice, facilitate access to research (evidence and training) and promote collaborative working.
- coordinating a UK-wide research network of key pharmacy academics, linked to other professional research networks.
- identifying the role of the MPharm curriculum in preparing practising pharmacists in the use of research principles and evidence in decision making.
- developing a support infrastructure for collaborative/multiprofessional applications for research funding.

* Details of research priorities identified can be found in the Summary Document or Workshop Recommendations.