

## PHARMACY IN THE FUTURE – DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF LONDON'S PHARMACISTS

### 1. Introduction

Community pharmacy services offer perhaps the most easily accessible face of the NHS. Every day, six million people visit a community pharmacy. However, the service they receive is largely centred around the dispensing of medicines and the provision of advice about minor ailments.

Throughout the 1990s, the pharmacy profession proposed that the role of community pharmacists should be extended. Pharmacists could offer a greater range of services and shift from a reactive dispensing role to one of providing 'pharmaceutical care'<sup>i</sup>. This message was taken up by the Department of Health when it published the pharmacy element to the NHS Plan, *Pharmacy in the Future*<sup>ii</sup>. *Pharmacy in the Future* set out arrangements for, inter alia, Local Pharmaceutical Services Pilots (an extension to local contracting in primary care enabled by the 2001 Health and Social Care Act) and 'medicines management' (greater involvement of pharmacists in the management of patients' prescribed medicines). In addition, it seems likely that, in the future, pharmacists will be able to become supplementary prescribers and the regulation of the supply of medicines is liberalized.

However, while *Pharmacy in the Future* assured community pharmacists of a greater role in wider primary health care, changes have been occurring to the contractor base. Over the last decade, the proportion of contracts owned by 'multiples' (pharmacy contractors with more than five contracts) has increased from 25% to over 40% and the whole sector has come under increased competition from 'general grocers' (e.g. large supermarkets). The removal of resale price maintenance on over-the-counter medicines is estimated to hit small pharmacists particularly hard as profit margins have tightened<sup>iii</sup>.

Of particular concern is the impact of these changes on patient access to primary care. The national patient survey<sup>iv</sup> suggests that Londoners are more likely to be dissatisfied with the availability and convenience of general practice, perhaps making them more likely to value extensions to the role of community pharmacists. However, the market pressures on small community pharmacists may reduce access to these services in areas where businesses are unsustainable. It is possible that the most vulnerable pharmacies will be those serving deprived populations away from major shopping areas. In addition, the Office for Fair Trading has recently launched an inquiry into control of entry in community pharmacy. This may also impact on the distribution of access to community pharmacy services.

## **2. The King's Fund's Community Pharmacy Programme**

The community pharmacy programme has three components:

### ***i. Extending Local Contracting to Community Pharmacy***

The Fund will carry out a descriptive survey of the first wave of Local Pharmaceutical Services Pilots. This will involve an analysis of:

- Numbers and distribution of pilots
- Pilot priorities
- Typology of emerging organisational forms

This will be followed up with more in-depth work with selected pilots to identify developmental needs of providers and commissioners.

This programme element will continue the work already undertaken on local contracting in primary care (Personal Medical and Dental Services Pilots) and will seek to provide early learning to the NHS while LPS pilots are still at a formative stage.

### ***ii. Capacity to Change: the developmental needs of community pharmacists in North East London***

*Pharmacy in the Future* sets a challenging agenda for community pharmacists. If it is to be implemented it will require intensive professional and personal development for existing and new pharmacists. The Fund will survey community pharmacists in the North East London sector to assess their attitudes towards the requirements of the NHS Plan, their developmental needs and the fit of national and local/personal priorities.

The survey will take place in February and will be followed up by telephone interviews to test themes in greater depth. This project is being carried out in partnership with the three health authorities (Barking and Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest and East London and The City) and the three Local Pharmaceutical Committees.

### ***iii. The Role of Pharmacists in Demand Management***

This component is largely desk-based and will comprise of:

- a review of existing literature on the effectiveness of extended pharmacy roles
- an analysis of emerging models of demand management in the NHS (e.g. NHS Direct, Walk-in-Centres) and the potential role of pharmacists
- an analysis of European models of pharmaceutical care

This work is intended to inform and extend work on demand management and the future of the NHS.

### 3. Programme Outputs

The programme will deliver a number of key outputs:

- Future of Community Pharmacy conference (20 March 2002) – an event for pharmacy, health authority, PCT and Regional Office stakeholders to debate the implications of *Pharmacy in the Future*, share good practice, hear early findings from research.
- Contribution to the development of central policy in support of LPS pilots (RL has already contributed to the national debate on LPS guidance and will facilitate a London Regional Office stakeholder event)
- Publications arising from the research into LPS pilots and developmental needs of community pharmacists (both journal articles and King's Fund Key Points)
- Stakeholder event in North East London sector to ensure that the research findings are embedded in the local health community.

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<sup>i</sup> Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, *Building the Future – a strategy for a 21<sup>st</sup> century pharmaceutical service*, RPSGB, London, 1997.

<sup>ii</sup> Department of Health, *Pharmacy in the future – implementing the NHS plan: a programme for pharmacy in the NHS*, Department of Health, London, 2000.

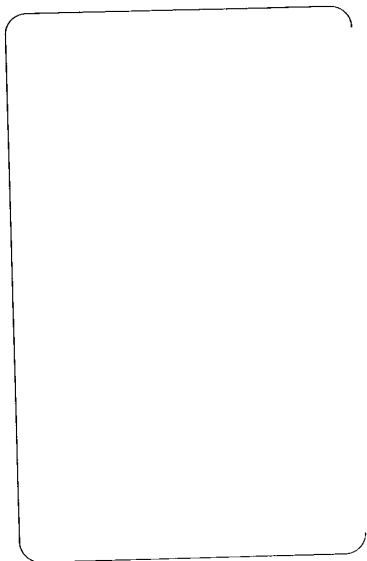
<sup>iii</sup> Lewis, R. *Rewriting the script*, The Guardian, 17 January 2001.

<sup>iv</sup> Airey C., Bruster S., Erens B., Lilley, S-J., Pickering K., Pitson L. *National surveys of NHS patients: general practice 1998*. NHS Executive, London, 1999.

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