



## **UKCPA policy on the inclusion of pharmaceutical scientists in the Royal Pharmaceutical Society**

### **Background**

The content of the undergraduate pharmacy degree has traditionally been heavily weighted towards science. Over time, undergraduate courses began to include clinical content – applying science to practice – and now all pharmacy degrees in the UK incorporate clinical placements into the course.

More recently, a subcommittee of Medical Education England - an independent body set up to review medical education and advise the Department of Health on policy - called Modernising Pharmacy Careers released their proposals on the undergraduate degree. They recommend that the current 4-year MPharm plus 12-month pre-registration period is merged into a 5-year MPharm degree with integrated clinical placements to give a “greater clinical practice experience for students”<sup>1</sup>.

However, the pharmacist’s ability to serve patients’ needs is enhanced by being able to understand the underpinning science and technology that provides us with medicines that can be safely and effectively used by patients. On a multidisciplinary ward round with the doctor, the nurse, the pharmacist and of course, the patient, it is the pharmacist who is uniquely able to give an authoritative view on the importance and understanding of the applied pharmacology of the drug molecule, on the appropriate dosage form selection for an individual patient, and to advise what is available for use in the specific circumstances surrounding that patient.

In March 2011 the Assembly of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society agreed that their members would be balloted in June 2011 on the Special Resolution to introduce a Pharmaceutical Scientist membership category. In a joint statement RPS Welsh, Scottish and English Boards and the RPS Assembly said: “The formation of the new professional body provides an opportunity for a new membership category that will allow pharmaceutical scientists to join the Society. It is important that the Society is representative of all professional people involved in drug discovery and delivery. Pharmaceutical scientists, who play a significant role through the teaching, research, discovery and the development of medicines, will enrich the knowledge of these matters within the Society and will bring many benefits to all pharmacists.”

### **The integration of science and practice**

The integration of science and practice is a concept that the UKCPA positively promotes. We co-sponsor a Science into Practice award led by the British Pharmaceutical Students’ Association and we regularly have keynote presentations from academic scientists at our national symposia. The UKCPA supports practitioners and better practice; this encompasses the application of science

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.mee.nhs.uk/latest\\_news/publications/mpc\\_ws1\\_proposals.aspx](http://www.mee.nhs.uk/latest_news/publications/mpc_ws1_proposals.aspx)

generally, and specifically the notion that clinical pharmaceuticals is what gets drug molecules into patients safely and effectively.

This is critical because patients need:

- to receive an accurate dose (for example, paediatric doses and the skewed ratios of age and body size);
- to have medicines which are stable enough to store for an appropriate length of time (for example, ready to use etanercept or storing medicines in monitored dose systems);
- formulations which reduce side effects and enhance outcome (for example, liposomal amphotericin);
- solid medicine formulations which can be swallowed (such as FasTabs or Melt formulations);
- medicines which have more than one route of administration (for example, IV paracetamol, transdermal opiates or sublingual formulations of GTN);
- medicines that can be taken less frequently (such as PEG interferon, or modified release capsules or tablets);
- medicines which don't require manipulation (for example, pre-filled syringes and other targeted delivery routes).

Improvements in the medicines which are available to patients are dependent on clinicians and scientists discussing together the problems and potential solutions. Pharmaceutical scientists are also a vital part of pharmacy education, particularly at undergraduate level and it is important to maintain professional links with them. The relationship between scientists and practitioners is vital to patients and should be nurtured, encouraged and celebrated.

### **The UKCPA perspective on pharmaceutical science**

The Report of the Working Party on Professional Regulation and Leadership in Pharmacy (the 'Carter Report'<sup>2</sup>) states that "A Royal College for Pharmacy should create an Academy of Pharmaceutical Sciences to provide a forum for pharmaceutical scientists, particularly those working in the academic and industrial sectors." Furthermore, it is clear that pharmaceutical scientists make a distinct and notable contribution to the research and development aspirations that our professional body has.

Without science we would have no therapies for patients. Given the importance that pharmaceutical scientists have in supporting the care of patients and the work of pharmacists, UKCPA wholeheartedly encourages and welcomes them to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the working party on professional regulation and leadership in pharmacy, by Lord Carter of Coles. Available at: [http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_074662.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_074662.pdf). Accessed 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2011.