



ALL-PARTY PHARMACY GROUP

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General Public Unaware of New Pharmacy Services

9 August 2006 - Immediate

Consumers and patients are unaware of the full range of services provided by their community pharmacy, was the key point to come out of the first evidence session held today in the All Party Pharmacy Group's Future of Pharmacy Inquiry.

Speaking at the session, representatives from both Which? and Asthma UK highlighted the need to further educate the public about the services offered by pharmacists, including Medicines Use Reviews (MURs), health screening programmes such as chlamydia testing and general health advice.

Asthma UK recently surveyed 200 asthmatics to establish their understanding of pharmacy services and found that the majority were unaware their pharmacy provided a MUR service. Patients with long-term conditions, such as people with asthma, and those taking more than one medication, can benefit significantly from MURs.

Dr Howard Stoaite MP (Labour, Dartford), Chair of the Group, welcomed the comments made at the session:

"This is a critical issue as we seek to examine how the role of pharmacists should develop – both in the community and in secondary care settings.

"Public perception of the pharmacy profession is key to its development and contribution to healthcare, and if the public are unaware of the services now offered in pharmacies they will be unable to make informed choices about how to best make use of the health care currently available to them. This is particularly important, given the new contract for NHS services in community pharmacy.

Dr Stoaite questioned who should take responsibility for educating the public:

"This issue is important for everyone involved in the delivery of healthcare in pharmacy – from pharmacists themselves through to Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), patient and consumer organisations, and the Department of Health.

“All these stakeholders have a responsibility to work together to inform the public of what the pharmacy-based healthcare that is available and how they can access it.

“If we wish to provide patients with the best service possible we need a fully integrated primary care and public health network and we need to make the public aware of it.”

Today’s evidence session was the first in a series of public meetings planned as part of the All Party Pharmacy Group’s Future of Pharmacy Inquiry. The Inquiry is designed to engage interested parties in discussing how pharmacy develops its role in the NHS.

Dr Stoate adds:

“Today’s session was a great success. The aim of our Inquiry is to challenge the profession, policy makers and the NHS to think about how pharmacy services should develop over the coming years.

“And the points which have arisen from today’s evidence session demonstrate how much we can learn from engaging with key stakeholders to ensure that the public receive the best health care available.

“I look forward to our future sessions and hearing from the broad range of witnesses who have yet to give evidence.”

The next evidence session for the All Party Parliamentary Group’s Future of Pharmacy Inquiry will be held after the parliamentary summer recess.

ENDS

Notes for Editors

1. The All-Party Pharmacy Group is an all-party group of more than one hundred MPs and peers. Its stated purpose is to raise awareness of the profession of pharmacy, and to promote pharmacists' current and potential contribution to the health of the nation.
2. Details of future evidence sessions will be available shortly.
3. Further information about the All-Party Pharmacy Group’s Inquiry into the Future of Pharmacy, including the questionnaire for interested parties, is available on the Group’s website www.appg.org.uk
4. The All-Party Pharmacy Group receives financial support from the Company Chemists’ Association, the National Pharmacy Association, the Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. It receives administrative assistance from Luther Pendragon.
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