

## **Pharmaceutical Society NI**

### **Annual General Meeting**

**06 October 2016**

#### **President's Address**

As the regulator of the pharmacy profession in Northern Ireland our core function is to help protect patients and the wider public by ensuring pharmacists provide safe and quality services in Northern Ireland. In February 2016 we launched The Code, which outlines the minimum professional standards of conduct, ethics and performance expected from all pharmacists on the Register. This new Code replaced and updated the Code of Ethics (2009) and serves as the cornerstone of our work as a regulator and informs all the Professional Standards and Guidance documents we produce.

The publication of The Code, which came into effect in March 2016, was an important watershed for the organisation and was the result of an extensive period of engagement and consultation with the public and the profession, to whom we are indebted, in Northern Ireland. As a result of our engagement work we have made The Code a simpler and more succinct document for pharmacists to use and the public to understand.

The Code's core principle remains 'always put the patient first', but it also introduces additional sections on the duty of candour; raising concerns; communications, partnership and teamwork; maintaining professional boundaries; and using social media. This brings The Code up to date with current regulatory focus; it will help pharmacists in their daily practice and reinforce the high standards in local pharmacy to the public.

This last year also saw the organisation consult on and propose increases in certain registrant fees. Members of Council appreciate that nobody welcomes an increase in fees. However, with the last increase being in 2009, we are pleased that we have been able to keep the changes considerably below the prevailing rate of inflation. With the Regulator gaining new powers in 2012, even though we have introduced significant efficiencies, the costs of regulation have nonetheless increased. Inevitably we have had to cover some of these additional costs of regulating the pharmacy profession through an increase in certain fees. As a Council, when we see budgetary issues are presumption is not to increase fees, but rather to look for efficiencies; a fee increase is a last resort.

This process was further complicated by the discovery of historical anomalies in the legislative basis for some fees. I would like to take this opportunity to again assure all

registrants and pre-registrant students that Council has worked with the Executive team to regularise our entire fees structure to provide those who pay a fee, with a fair framework, which is accessible and transparent. As part of modernisation of pharmacy regulation we will be seeking a simpler more flexible arrangement for setting and altering fees which will allow us to better ensure that fees are apportioned across our activities in a proportionate and fair manner.

An outworking of this work on fees has brought greater clarity to our relationship with the Department of Health Northern Ireland in relation to the making and approval of our Regulations. As a consequence Council has asked the Executive team to carry out a review of compliance with all current and historic Regulations.

This last year also saw The Department of Health Northern Ireland carry out a consultation on the future of pharmacy regulation in Northern Ireland. Council responded with its considered opinion that, in the interests of the public and pharmacists alike, pharmacy regulation should be carried out by a devolved regulator, but with the full separation of professional representation and regulation. In its response Council expressed disappointment at the quality of evidence and information provided in the consultation document. The Council stated its concern that an objective assessment of the options presented would be difficult for the public and registrants to make on the basis of the information provided.

We have also actively participated in the wider review of the regulation of health care professionals across the United Kingdom and await the outcome of both reviews with keen interest.

Going forward, 2016 will see the end of the Council's Corporate Strategy, "A New Era". I will lead the work on renewing our Strategy for the coming years, focusing on ensuring that we are proportionate, fair and transparent in all that we do, recognising the need to ensure the burden of regulations is minimised.

2015/16 saw three Council members reach the end of their appointments. I wish to thank Helena Buchannan, Dr Lisa Byres and Brenda Maitland for their extraordinary commitment to and support for the Pharmaceutical Society NI and public safety generally and wish them well in their future endeavours. More recently a number of other Council members' period in office has ended, including Mr Mark Nelson, Mr Gary Mckenna, and Mrs Marie Smith. I am delighted that six new Council Members have been appointed by the Minister; Ms Colleen Duffy, Mr Ciaran Byrne, Miss Eleanor Magennis, Ms Laura Murphy, Mr Mark Campbell and Professor Patrick Murphy. We are now going forward with a nearly full complement of Council members.

This report further outlines the work and achievements of the organisation in 2015/16. By virtue of our legislation, the Pharmaceutical Society NI also holds responsibility for professional leadership. As the responsible regulator of the pharmacy profession Council recognises that it has no mandate to perform this

function and through a robust scheme of delegation it has delegated all leadership functions to the Pharmacy Forum. The Pharmacy Forum's Annual Report is appended to this report.

Finally, I want to record my thanks, and that of Council, to the Chief Executive and all his staff for their unstinting dedication and hard work in supporting the Council and delivering on a diverse range of objectives and services over the last year.