



**Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society**
of Great Britain

Scottish Pharmacy Board

28 August 2008

Callum Thomson
Health and Sport Committee Clerk,
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Dear Callum

Submission to the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sports Committee's Health Inequalities Inquiry

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in Scotland, England and Wales. The primary objectives of the Society are to lead, regulate, develop and represent the profession of pharmacy. The Society leads and supports the development of the profession within the context of the public benefit. This includes the advancement of science, practice, education and knowledge in pharmacy.

The Scottish Pharmacy Board of the RPSGB represents over 4,400 pharmacists in Scotland, working in all areas of the profession including community, hospital, primary care, industry, education, the prison service, and research.

The Scottish Pharmacy Board (SPB), which focuses on the professional and leadership aspects of the profession, welcomes the Health and Sport Committee's decision to hold a Public Inquiry and would like to outline the contribution pharmacy can make to reducing health inequalities.

As Chair of the Scottish Pharmacy Board, I would like to offer the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sports Committee our support and assistance, and would be delighted to meet to discuss the many ways in which pharmacy can help achieve your ambitions for the people of Scotland.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sandra Melville".

Sandra Melville

Chair, Scottish Pharmacy Board

Scottish Pharmacy Board of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Submission to the Scottish Parliament's Health and Sports Committee's Health Inequalities Inquiry

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in Scotland, England and Wales. The Scottish Pharmacy Board represents the 4,400 pharmacists in Scotland, working in all areas of the profession including community, hospital, primary care, industry, education, the prison service, and research.

The Scottish Pharmacy Board welcomes the Health and Sport Committee's decision to hold a Public Inquiry and would like to outline the contribution pharmacy can make to reducing health inequalities. A key aspect of reducing health inequalities is making services affordable and accessible to all.

The Scottish Government's action plan "*Better Health, Better Care*" pledges to make healthcare more accessible by delivering more local services. Pharmacists are well placed to make a major contribution to the goal of creating a healthier Scotland. In particular, pharmacy can make a distinctive contribution to the priority threats of smoking, alcohol, obesity, unwanted pregnancy and inequalities in health.

Traditionally the local pharmacist is a trusted source of health information and advice. This was confirmed by a recent YouGov survey (August 2008), which found that four out of five Scots would consult their local pharmacist for a wide range of clinical and lifestyle advice.

Pharmacists are the most accessible healthcare professionals, seeing the greatest number of people and patients on a daily basis, usually without an appointment. 95% of the population lives within 20 minutes of a community pharmacy. Pharmacies are convenient for patients and the public, with extended opening hours in the evenings and at weekends.

Throughout Scotland pharmacy offers local access and can deliver improved healthcare, based on a portfolio of services that are patient centred, medicines focused and community spirited. The national Minor Ailment Service enables pharmacists to advise patients and provide medicines to the most vulnerable groups in the community, without appointments, thus facilitating self care, early intervention and prompt referral when necessary.

The Scottish Pharmacy Board also highlights the impact pharmacists working in secondary care have on disadvantaged communities. Hospital pharmacists have extensive direct patient contact, providing admission and discharge clinics, participating in clinical ward rounds, and contributing to specialist outpatient clinics. Around the country hospital pharmacists are bringing their specialist knowledge out to the community, reducing patient journeys and increasing access. The Committee should encourage and support this integration of services.

Public Health

The Public Health Service element of the Pharmaceutical Care Services Contract requires every community pharmacy to provide an area to support health improvement activities, including the display of health promotion campaign materials and access to appropriate health education information sources. Community pharmacies are often the first port of call for members of the public requiring access to advice and support for self-care, health protection and health improvement. Community pharmacists and their support staff:

- Provide information and advice to promote self-care and health improvement including signposting to other agencies.
- Make opportunistic interventions in areas such as primary prevention and healthy lifestyles as an integral part of the day-to-day activity in a community pharmacy.

The Scottish Pharmacy Board welcomes the confidence shown in the pharmacy profession by the recently announced expansion of the Public Health Service with the introduction of national services for Smoking Cessation, Chlamydia testing and treating, and provision of Emergency Hormonal Contraception. Further strategies to tackle health inequalities should maximise the contribution that pharmacists and their teams in all settings can make to improving health by extending their roles as advocates for health improvement. Public health pharmacists can provide specialist advice in this area.

The Committee should consider:

- How pharmacists and their teams can identify individuals with risk factors for disease, contribute to screening programmes, offer lifestyle assessments and support, and targeted interventions;
- Maximise the potential to engage with traditionally hard to reach population groups, e.g. men's health, offering information, advice and support for self-care;
- Pharmacists have frequent contact with pregnant and nursing mothers and young children. They can make interventions pre- and post-conception and throughout childhood contributing to the Scottish Government and COSLA 'Early Years' framework;
- Developing pharmacy's contribution to weight management and alcohol awareness;
- How pharmacy-based needle exchange schemes and supervised administration schemes are reducing the spread of HIV infection and improving the management of substance misuse in local communities;
- Scotland's network of community pharmacies and specialist substance misuse pharmacists provide an infrastructure and wealth of expertise that supports not only drug misusers themselves but wider public health strategies and should be part of a multidisciplinary approach to the road to recovery.

Long Term Conditions

As the people of Scotland age, increasing numbers are presenting with long-term conditions such as diabetes and coronary heart disease. This is a fact recognised by policy makers and health professionals and is therefore an important health policy focus. The contribution of pharmacy to the care of people with long-term conditions includes encouraging safe and effective use of medicines; promoting healthy lifestyles; supporting anticipatory and self care; carrying out medication reviews; managing disease systematically within multi-professional teams; and working in partnership with other healthcare professionals. Independent and supplementary prescribing is an important part of chronic disease management allowing pharmacists to initiate and adjust medication to maximise therapeutic effect and reduce potential for adverse reactions.

The Scottish Government has prioritised prevention and treatment of Cardiovascular Disease and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, which are linked to smoking and

social deprivation. NHS Health Scotland statistics reveal that in the most deprived areas levels of smoking prevalence are similar to those seen nationally in the 1970s and the gap

between socio-economic groups is widening. Pharmacy-based smoking cessation services have demonstrated effectiveness and success in targeting smokers who are reluctant to engage with formal services.

Strategic Approach

The Scottish Government's Ministerial Task Force Report on Health Inequalities, "*Equally Well*" recognises that a cross cutting approach is needed if a reduction in health inequalities is to be achieved. The Scottish Pharmacy Board is of the view that the role of pharmacists in tackling health inequalities can be further developed. There is therefore potential to expand and build on excellent work by considering:

- The importance of building on the strengths of pharmacy, the evidence base for pharmaceutical public health and the contribution that pharmacy can make to strategies designed to reduce health inequalities;
- The potential for tackling health inequalities by investing in health improvement services in pharmacies in remote and rural areas and those areas with the worst health indicators;
- Allowing pharmacists access to relevant electronic patient records in order to provide comprehensive services with improved patient safety;
- Recognition of the increasing clinical role of pharmacists in both primary and secondary care and how this can improve local access to healthcare services;
- The need to develop closer working relationships between pharmacists, local authorities and Community Health Partnerships to help influence the wider determinants of health;
- The contribution that pharmacists can make as community leaders, health champions, employers and entrepreneurs in developing social capital for neighbourhood renewal and development;
- The location of community pharmacies provides opportunities for community involvement and leadership via school and workplace initiatives;

The Scottish Pharmacy Board also encourages the Health and Sport Committee to:

- Support partnership working between the key stakeholders, patient interest groups, local authorities, the public and the Scottish Pharmacy Board;
- Recognise that in future health strategies pharmacists are not only experts in medicines but as a profession have significant additional skills enabling them to make a wider contribution to the Scottish health agenda;
- Develop a public awareness campaign to ensure that the public fully appreciate and understand the scope of healthcare services available from pharmacists;
- Consider the potential for pharmacy to contribute to the needs of remote and rural communities by investing in the provision of increased pharmaceutical care including exploring new models of provision and increased use of information technology.

In conclusion the Scottish Pharmacy Board contends that with the continued support of the political community and a greater public understanding of the developing role of pharmacy, there is much that pharmacy can contribute to reducing health inequalities.

We urge the Committee to consider the contribution the pharmacy profession can make to reducing inequalities in Scotland and to include the profession at all stages of planning and delivery of healthcare services.