



**Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society**
of Great Britain

1 Lambeth High Street, London SE1 7JN

Tel: 020 7572 2335

Fax: 020 7572 2503

News release

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SOCIETY WARNS HEALTH SELECT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH IMPACT OF OFT REPORT

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has urged the Health Select Committee to consider the impact on health of implementing the Office of Fair Trading's (OFT) report into the distribution of NHS community pharmacy services.

Following a request for a memorandum from the Committee, the Society wrote to highlight its concerns about the report's limited consideration of the NHS plans for pharmacy for England, Scotland and Wales. The Society pointed out that all three plans aim to use the community pharmacy infrastructure as a platform to deliver local clinical services for the NHS. To effectively undertake this role, community pharmacies will need to be planned and managed so that they are sited in areas of patient need.

The Society told the Committee that, with the NHS as main customer for the majority of services that community pharmacies provide, the OFT principle that 'competitive markets to which there are no barriers to entry generally serve best the interests of consumers' should not be considered applicable. Implementing the OFT's plan would lead to a distribution of pharmacies based on commercial drivers and not patient need, and could disadvantage those vulnerable groups already most in need of the pharmacy services.

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In addition, the Society asked the Committee to consider the effect of the proposed lifting of regulations on the current workforce shortage that the profession is experiencing. If deregulation were to occur, the report predicts a large increase in the total number of community pharmacies, which would further exacerbate the current shortage of both pharmacists and support staff.

Nigel Graham, the Society's head of practice, said: "The Society disagrees with the OFT assumption that the best driver for the development of community pharmacy would be commercial attrition. The Society feels that development through a planned expansion of professional services to meet local healthcare needs, would be in the best interests of the public. The Society would be strongly opposed to any development that threatened to adversely affect the quality and access of healthcare services to the public."

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**For further information please contact Natalie Sticklen or Zoë Davies in the
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain's public relations unit
020 7572 2335/6**