



Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain

Helping pharmacists achieve excellence

4 May, 2007

PRACTICE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

DIRECTORATE

Practice Division

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TO: Sanco-Forum-information-to-patients@ec.europa.eu

Dear Colleague,

High Level Pharmaceutical Forum Public Consultation on health-related information to patients

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. It also regulates pharmacy technicians on a voluntary basis, which is expected to become statutory under anticipated legislation. 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. In addition, it promotes the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums. The Society has responsibility for a wide range of functions that combine to assure competence and fitness to practise. These include controlled entry into the profession, education, registration, setting and enforcing professional standards, promoting good practice, providing support for improvement, dealing with poor performance, dealing with misconduct and removal from the register.

The RPSGB would like to endorse the views submitted by the PGEU (*Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union*).

With regard to the diabetes information package;

- The diabetes information pack is a useful starting point for discussions on how to best disseminate disease related information to patients
- The forum needs to discuss how this information should be developed before developing the information itself
- Information should be developed by an independent group representative of the member states and including a broad range of patients, health professionals and scientific organisations.

With regard to the quality principles;

- While the principles provide a clear basis on which to judge the quality of information it needs to be clear who judges this. This needs to be discussed further to ensure it is independent and unbiased.
- As health professionals with a relevant role in the provision of information to patients we provide objective and unbiased information. We believe patients would expect objective and unbiased information on medicines and health-related issues to be made available to them and not solely commercial or brand information with no comparative data. This should be a core principle in providing information to patients.

In conclusion, we would like to support the Pharmaceutical Forum in its aim to provide high quality information to patients, but we would expect that the Commission's proposals resulting from this consultation will not only respect the decisions of the European Parliament (in 2002) to prevent industry produced information to be directly communicated to the general public but also reinforce what has already been achieved with this.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Gimson
Lead pharmacist, long-term conditions and public health



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02 July 2007

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Dear Colleague,

RE: High Level Pharmaceutical Forum Public Consultation on health-related information to patients

Further to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's response in May 2007 to the consultation above I am writing to provide a link to a series of reports on direct-to-consumer advertising prepared by the Society which may be useful in the Forum's further discussions.

The Society supports the provision of balanced, evidence-based, accurate and accessible information on:

- a medical condition
- the range of treatment and care options available
- comparison of medicines of a similar type, or for the same condition
- a single medicine.

An information strategy for patients needs to address the challenges of:

- different cultural and language requirements
- differing levels of education
- access to the internet
- the restrictions on activity imposed by serious illness
- different circumstances such as suspected or diagnosed disease.

The Society supports and promotes an approach to the prescribing and taking of medicines involving negotiation between a patient and a health care professional, resulting in an agreement that accords primacy to the beliefs and wishes of the patient.

The creation of national or international standards for patient information could protect the public from misleading or biased information. Patients and patient groups should play a key role in setting such standards alongside healthcare professionals including pharmacists, informatics experts and other stakeholders.

Best practice in providing information for patients needs to be identified, evaluated and more widely disseminated, and patients and the public should be involved in the preparation of information.

The Society's reports on direct-to-consumer advertising can be found on our website:

Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines: a review of international policy and evidence. A report for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. November 2001 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarep.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines: a review of international policy and evidence. A report for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. November 2001. Executive Summary (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcaexec.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription medicines: a review of international policy and evidence. Supplement to a report for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. November 2001 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: first quarterly update - January to March 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0203.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: second quarterly update - April to June 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0206.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: third quarterly update - July to September 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0209.pdf>)

Direct-to-consumer advertising (DTCA) of prescription medicines: fourth quarterly update - October to December 2002 (<http://www.rpsgb.org.uk/pdfs/dtcarev0212.pdf>)

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information.

Yours Sincerely,

Paul Gimson
Lead for long-term conditions and public health