

Press Release



3 February 2004

NPA RESPONSE TO 'WHICH?' PHARMACY REPORT

The NPA has responded to the Consumer's Association 'Which?' Report on pharmacy - which revealed that advice in 35 out of 84 anonymous visits to pharmacies was unsatisfactory. The Report follows a research survey, carried out in October 2003, where 12 undercover 'Which?' researchers visited 84 pharmacies in England, Wales and Scotland. Four different situations were acted out 21 times by 3 researchers. The scenarios were:

- Being on the contraceptive pill and asking for St. John's Wort
- Researchers who had unprotected sex - asked to speak in private about taking emergency contraception
- Asking for treatment for a bout of traveller's diarrhoea
- Middle-aged researcher asking to buy low-dose aspirin to reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke

Responding to the Consumer's Association 'Which?' report on Pharmacy, John D'Arcy, Chief Executive of The National Pharmaceutical Association said: "The NPA is disappointed and concerned with the findings of this 'research'. As the Report acknowledges, pharmacists are in transition toward greater and more varied professional responsibilities. We fully support this, but recognise that in making this transition, it is essential that pharmacists provide professional services of a quality that patients are entitled to expect."

"Whilst recognising the limitations of small scale studies of this nature, we must heed the underlying messages. We note particularly that pharmacists need to do more to improve confidentiality in the pharmacy – and they also need to be more visible and accessible to the public, rather than buried away in the dispensary. This highlights both resource and infrastructure issues – and we welcome the Consumer's Association observation that Government needs to provide more investment in community pharmacy to enhance pharmacists' professional role."

"Patients are no longer passive recipients of care – and we welcome the guidance given in the Report about getting the most from your pharmacy."

In particular, encouraging patients to proactively ask for more information and advice from their pharmacists, and urging patients to volunteer as much information as possible about their health and medical conditions. This is totally consistent with the NPA's 'Ask Your Pharmacist' Campaign messages to the public."

“The NPA has a pivotal role in supporting its members through the transition associated with role development. We need to reflect the report’s concerns in our training materials and other relevant member resources – and do everything possible to ensure our members and their staff deliver services to patients of the highest quality, at all times.”

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Notes to Editors:

1. The NPA represents the professional and commercial interests of the owners of 11,000 pharmacies in the UK. We have, in voluntary membership, virtually all pharmacies except Boots the Chemists Ltd. We are therefore, the principal body representing the community pharmacy sector.
2. For more information, please contact the NPA Press Office, on: 01727-858687, ext 3340, ext 3227, ext 3265 or ext 3311.