

Press Release



26th March 2003

NPA REACTION TO GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO OFT REPORT INTO PHARMACY SERVICES

The National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA) is disappointed that the Government has not followed the line taken by the devolved administrations in rejecting the OFT recommendation. Since the publication of the OFT Report in mid-January, the NPA has lobbied vociferously for the recommendation to be rejected – and will continue to do so.

NPA Chief Executive, John D’Arcy, said: “The Association believes that the OFT’s stark recommendation to deregulate the market will be a retrograde step – and not in patients’ best interests. It will put at risk the current pharmacy network and frustrate Government’s plans to make better use of pharmacists in delivering the *NHS Plan*.”

Indeed, this was acknowledged by DTI Minister, Patricia Hewitt, only last week in her statement in the House of Commons, when she said: “... *It is essential that pharmacists should be able to fulfil not only their present valued and trusted role, but the wider role envisaged for them in the NHS plan: simply deregulating the market will not do that ...*”

John D’Arcy added: “The NPA fully supports the Government’s objectives towards improving quality of, and access to, pharmacy services for the benefit of patients and local communities.

Whilst the current regulatory controls work well, there are areas where improvements can be made – and the Association looks forward to playing its part in assisting the Government in developing its ‘balanced package’ of proposals. We want to move forward and work constructively with the Government to identify any gaps in pharmacy service provision – and to work collaboratively on solutions. But deregulation cannot be the answer: it is disproportionate to any shortcomings with the current arrangements.”

Health Minister, Alan Milburn, has today stated that the Government wanted a situation where “... *more NHS patients can use the skills of community pharmacists, who are trained clinicians, for advice, information and services.*” The NPA fully endorses this objective.

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Notes to Editors:

1. The National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA) is the trade association that represents the professional and commercial interests of the owners of around 11,000 community pharmacies in the United Kingdom.
2. The NHS (Pharmaceutical Services) Regulations were introduced in 1987. The Regulations set out the procedure for the inclusion of pharmacies in the pharmaceutical lists of health authorities. Only pharmacies included in a pharmaceutical list are entitled to provide NHS pharmaceutical services. Inclusion is based on whether pharmacies are necessary or desirable for the adequate provision of pharmaceutical services in any given neighbourhood.
3. For more information, please contact the NPA Press Office, on: 01727-858687, ext 3227, 3311, 3340