

Press Release



17 July 2003

NPA EXPRESSES DISAPPOINTMENT AND ANXIETY AT THE GOVERNMENT'S 'BALANCED PACKAGE OF PROPOSALS' ON CONTROL OF ENTRY

The National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA) welcomes the Government's rejection of the OFT's recommendation of total deregulation – and is encouraged that in so doing, Ministers have made it clear that pharmacy services are regarded as a health – rather than retail - matter. The Association particularly welcomes Patricia Hewitt's view that '*... pharmacists are trained clinicians, not simply shopkeepers, and they will have an even greater role in the NHS in the future.... We will do nothing to jeopardise their position....*'

However, the NPA is disappointed that the DoH has not followed the lead taken by Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in opting for an outright and robust rejection of the OFT's recommendation.

John D'Arcy, NPA Chief Executive, said: "Today's decision is very much a compromise approach – and comes after months of Government prevarication. This is clearly a complex matter and as ever, the devil will be in the detail. We need time to examine these proposed measures in detail, to ensure they provide the flexibility that is needed to enhance service provision where this is required, and, crucially, that they meet the needs of patients and health commissioners. We are particularly keen to ensure that although Government says it has rejected deregulation, the new proposals do not amount to deregulation through the back door!

We have always regarded the OFT recommendation as being 'a solution looking for a problem' - and are very concerned that we may turn a system which worked well for patients and the NHS into one that doesn't."

This is a critical time for the profession, with community pharmacy looking to enhance its contribution to healthcare - and in the process of negotiating a new contract with the Government to do just that. The Association is keen to move forward with the business of ensuring pharmacy's contribution to primary healthcare services. As part of this, its members will be working with Primary Care Trusts at local level, to ensure that pharmacy services match the needs of local communities.

-ends

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. In its submission document - '*Realising The Potential of Community Pharmacy: Assuring Public Access to The Pharmacy Network*' – the Association made a robust case in support of the existing Regulations, the keystone that underpins the pharmacy network, by supporting and delivering a rationally distributed pharmacy service in all the places where people live, shop and work. The NPA further argued that they were an effective means by which Government discharged its duty of ensuring patients have widespread access to NHS pharmaceutical services through a viable community pharmacy network.
4. For more information, please contact the NPA Press Office, on: 01727-858687, ext 3340, 3227, 3265, 3311.