

PSNC RESPONDS TO BMJ ARTICLE: “COMMUNITY PHARMACY: MOVING FROM DISPENSING TO DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT”

11 May – Responding to Professor Allyson Pollock’s article “Community Pharmacy: moving from dispensing to diagnosis and treatment”, published in this week’s British Medical Journal, PSNC Head of NHS Services Alastair Buxton said:

“Professor Pollock’s article, which characterises a developing role for pharmacy as part of “broader Government policy to incorporate the private sector into the provision of NHS care, and transfer tasks away from General Practitioners”, has a pro-GP and anti-pharmacy slant that seems founded more on entrenched bias than rigorous academic analysis. After all, both pharmacists and GPs operate as independent contractors within the NHS. It is rather disingenuous to ignore GPs’ financial incentives then in the same breath rail against shadowy corporate influences guiding ‘private, for-profit community pharmacies’.

“Few community pharmacists would disagree that local commissioning of enhanced pharmacy services is patchy, or that working relationships between pharmacists and other primary care practitioners need to be improved. Given the regularity with which Pollock cites “limited research”, one would have thought a more robust look into how best to strengthen these links might have made for a more productive, less unnecessarily divisive piece. Sadly, a balanced look at how to improve primary care provision does not seem to be a priority here.

“The simple facts are these: Community pharmacies deliver excellent value for money in primary care. They harness the expertise of highly skilled health professionals to provide quality services for NHS patients. And they are far more accessible than other primary care providers, offering services in a welcoming community setting without a two-week wait for an appointment. Most pharmacists will be unsurprised by the tired arguments of this skewed and speculative article. Professor Pollock’s tired approach should not distract from the growing momentum behind the development of community pharmacy.”

~Ends~

Notes to Editor

1. PSNC (The Pharmaceutical Services Negotiating Committee) is the body that represents community pharmacies in England and Wales on NHS matters.

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