

PRESS RELEASE

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PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

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PSNC Chairman calls for changes to pharmacy contract and new pharmacy services

***Huge dips in income are "unacceptable"
"Confidence is shaken"***

In his speech at the PSNC Annual Dinner on 12 March, attended by Pharmacy Minister Dawn Primarolo MP, Dr Chris Hodges called for a series of changes to be made to the pharmacy contract.

Dr Hodges said: "When we agreed the pharmacy contract with the Department of Health three years ago, it was on the basis of the concept of fair funding. The money paid to pharmacies by the NHS was calculated and agreed as being fair to the 9,750 pharmacies in England and fair to the NHS. Today, as a direct result of the changes to Control of Entry made by the Department of Health, there are 10,300 pharmacies and that number is growing. What was fair funding for 9,750 is not - and cannot be - fair funding for 10,300.

The failure to develop any new Advanced services means that all the investment by pharmacy contractors has gone unrewarded. That has shaken the confidence of community pharmacy."

Referring to the financial pressure currently experienced by contractors as a result of adjustments to reimbursement arrangements, Dr Hodges said: "In recent months there have been huge dips in NHS income for pharmacies and that has put many under real pressure. Pharmacies large and small have been struggling to break even because of the huge swings in NHS payments. That is unacceptable.

Pharmacists need funding stability and certainty so they can invest in and deliver new services. The financial attrition that pharmacies are experiencing is causing many to cut back on resources at precisely the time that the NHS should be developing them."

Dr Hodges said that while the pharmacy contract provided a good basis for fair funding and new services it was nevertheless “under great pressure”. He called on the Minister to work with PSNC to tackle the financial issues he had highlighted.

Dr Hodges highlighted the range of new pharmacy services introduced in one PCT, City & Hackney. While this was an exciting development, it was all too rare. “There are far more communities missing out than benefiting” he said.

Dr Hodges called for more Advanced pharmacy services that were nationally agreed and specified with national funding, specifically a minor ailments service, a weight management service, and a range of screening and diagnostic services in addition to services designed to manage long-term conditions such as diabetes and asthma.

Dr Hodges told guests that PSNC had “very high expectations” of the forthcoming white paper on pharmacy. “We need to see these new services urgently” he said. “We’re ready to work with the Department of Health to ensure that the forthcoming white paper and the outcome of Ara Darzi’s review will deliver them.”

-- ENDS --

Notes for editors:

1. The full text of Dr Hodges’ speech will be available via PSNC’s website after the Annual Dinner. Copies may also be requested by email dipen.shah@psnc.org.uk or by phone on 01296 432823.
2. Sue Sharpe will be available to journalists for comment from the morning of 13 March, via the contact details above.

For further information contact:

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