Modernising Pharmacy Careers Programme - Review of Pharmacist Undergraduate Education and Pre-registration Training

Dear Colleague,
I am writing to you on behalf of the Modernising Pharmacy Careers (MPC) Programme Board to update you on a key piece of work we are undertaking and encourage you to contribute to the project.

Modernising Pharmacy Careers is a major policy programme, launched by the Department of Health in February 2009 to ensure the pharmacy workforce have the knowledge, skills and capacities to deliver the services of the future for patients and the public. The scope of the programme covers education, training and careers of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and dispensing assistants. It will explore how education and training arrangements support and contribute to improvements in quality of care, public health, and pharmacy workforce planning.

The Modernising Pharmacy Careers Programme Board is one of four professional boards advising Medical Education England (MEE) on training, education and workforce planning in England for pharmacists, medicine, healthcare scientists and dentistry. The Board, chaired by the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer Dr Keith Ridge, is responsible for working with a range of key external stakeholders to advise on the delivery of changes set out in Chapter 7 of the Pharmacy White Paper (Pharmacy in England: building on strengths, delivering the future) including

- The development and implementation of a new approach to pharmacist undergraduate education and pre-registration training
- Enabling the registered pharmacy workforce to acquire the additional skills needed to deliver a wider range of clinical services
- Building on current arrangements for advanced pharmacy practice
- Facilitating changes in the training of all pharmacy staff to improve pharmacy skills mix - making the best use of all those working in pharmacy.

The Programme is focussing on action to deliver its objectives in three major work streams:
I – Education and Training (Pre-Qualification)
II – Developing Pharmacy Careers (Post Qualification)
III – National workforce planning

Work Stream I - Undergraduate education and pre-registration training
Work stream I is focussing on undergraduate pharmacy education and pre-registration training and its initial project is a review of the existing model for pharmacists’ undergraduate education and pre-registration training, to assess its content and continuing relevance, and to identify options for change for the MPC Programme Board and MEE to consider in early 2010.

In particular, the project will be looking at ways of achieving meaningful clinical context and experience throughout the undergraduate programme and determining whether this can be maximised by integrating the degree course with the pre-registration year.
The review project is expected to identify:
• The strengths and weaknesses inherent in the current undergraduate pharmacy degree course and pre-registration training as a foundation for enhancing delivery of clinical, leadership, professional and scientific aspects of pharmacy careers
• Any changes required in the pre-registration education and training of pharmacists to ensure that newly registered pharmacists can practise safely and effectively, and are appropriately prepared to undertake further post registration development where this is necessary
• To review the curriculum as it relates to clinical pharmacology and to evaluate any gaps relating to the in vivo sciences (pharmacology, pathology, toxicology and physiology) and to advise how these might be addressed
• Emerging options for implementing required changes, together with supporting evidence for any preferred option
• The implications for planning, funding and implementation of identified options for pharmacy education and pre-registration training in other parts of the UK.

Project logistics
The project team for the review was established by the MPC Programme Board in September 2009 and is broadly representative of the key stakeholders - universities, employers, students, NHS and industry.

In October, the Institute of Education (IoE) at the University of London was commissioned to support the project team by providing an external reflection on the current position through a review of literature and curricula, engagement with Schools of Pharmacy and pharmacy professional and regulatory bodies, and by interviewing academics, employers, pre-registration students and experienced pharmacists.

During the next phase of the project, focus groups of students and newly qualified pharmacists will be convened by the IoE to collect views on the current education and training and how it could be improved, and to solicit opinions on proposed changes to pharmacy education and training and the implications for students. Members of the project team have also been tasked with gathering information and views representing their sectors or specialties for consideration.

A stakeholder event will be held in central London on 18th January 2010 to consider the analysis of the current undergraduate and pre-registration arrangements, and give an opportunity to comment and contribute views on the options for change. The final report from the review team will be used to prepare a business case for any changes being proposed for the undergraduate education and pre-registration training, supported by an appropriate funding framework, and to inform future projects in this work stream.

We are currently working with MEE to upload information about the MPC programme on their website (www.mee.nhs.uk), but if you are interested in finding out more detail about the MPC programme, the Programme Board or the review project please email MPCprogramme@dh.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Keith Ridge
Chair, Modernising Pharmacy Careers Programme Board