

Professor Says Dramatic Culture Change Facing Irish Pharmacy

Tuesday, May 27, 2008: The re-professionalisation of Irish pharmacy will mean a dramatic change in the culture across the sector, according to Professor of Pharmacy Law and Ethics Joy Wingfield from Nottingham University.

Speaking at a lecture in University College Cork to mark the PSI Council's first meeting outside Dublin in its capacity as regulator, Professor Joy Wingfield highlighted that key developments such as the 2007 Pharmacy Act and the Pharmacy Ireland 2020 initiative will result in a momentous shift in how community pharmacies are run and how they are managed.

"Irish pharmacy is currently undergoing a period of dramatic flux. This new era of re-professionalised pharmacy in Ireland now means pharmacists will face new and significant challenges. A wider and deeper understanding of ethical challenges will become an integral part of Irish pharmacy. Pharmacists will have to balance and reconcile business and health goals, pressure from consumers and take on a much greater degree of accountability. They will need to be able to develop an enhanced competence, handle uncertainty and apply sound professional judgement. Rational decision making will be paramount," said Professor Wingfield.

She continued: "As in the UK, the re-professionalisation of Irish pharmacy means pharmacists developing a new relationship with patients and with other healthcare professionals. The implications for pharmacy education are also significant in that undergraduate and pre-reg training will need to meet these new industry requirements to underpin this continuing professional development. But ultimately, enhancing the professional role of pharmacy in Ireland will significantly contribute to improved patient safety."

In this changing environment, Professor Wingfield went on to emphasize that the PSI will have an ongoing but enhanced role to safeguard the public's wellbeing. Specifically, the regulator will have an ongoing responsibility to oversee fitness to practice as well as defining standards in terms of knowledge, skills and performance.

Dr Ambrose McLoughlin, Chief Executive Officer and Registrar of the PSI, said: "The UK is significantly further advanced down the line of re-professionalisation than we are. It is extremely useful to draw on and learn from the experiences of another country that has undergone the dynamic change that the pharmacy sector in Ireland is now encountering. Professor Wingfield's insights, particularly around the topic of ethics, have been both informative and educational."

The PSI recently published the interim report of its Pharmacy Ireland 2020 Working Group, titled 'Advancing Clinical Pharmacy Practice to Deliver Better Patient Care and Added Value Services', which charts a course for developing/progressing pharmacy practice and services. The report is based on a discussion paper prepared by the clinical Pharmacy Practice Research Group in the School of Pharmacy UCC.

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Editor's Note:

The Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, the Pharmacy Regulator, is the statutory body for pharmacists and pharmacies in Ireland. It acts in the public interest to regulate the profession.