

Ms Heidi Wright
RPSGB
1 Lambeth High Street
London
SE1 7JN

ENGLAND DIRECTORATE

Telephone: 020 7572 2602

Facsimile: 020 7572 2501

e-mail: heidi.wright@rpsgb.org

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**Your choice of GP practice: a consultation on how to enable people to register
with the GP practice of their choice
RPSGB response**

Background

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain is the professional and regulatory body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. It also regulates pharmacy technicians on a voluntary basis, which is expected to become statutory under anticipated legislation. The primary objectives of the Society are to lead, regulate, develop and represent the profession of pharmacy. The Society leads and supports the development of the profession within the context of the public benefit. This includes the advancement of science, practice, education and knowledge in pharmacy. In addition, it promotes the profession's policies and views to a range of external stakeholders in a number of different forums. Following the publication in 2007 of the Government White Paper Trust, Assurance and Safety - The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century, the Society is working towards the demerger of its regulatory and professional roles. This will see the establishment of a new general Pharmaceutical Council and a new professional body for pharmacy in 2010.

The Society welcomes the opportunity to respond the Department of Health's consultation on your choice of GP practice.

We agree with the principle that patients should have the ability to choose their own general practice and we would support option A. Being able to register with a GP practice more suited to a patients work / lifestyle would potentially cut down visits to A&E.

However, there are some points that need to be taken into consideration and these are outlined below.

If a number of patients register with GP practices in cities and large towns, close to where they work, this could have an impact on the pharmacy sector, particularly rural pharmacies. This restructure could cause such pharmacies to become unviable as much of the business will go into towns and near places of work. Also, more pharmacies may move from local communities to form a 'honeypot' effect around towns and industrial estates where patients are registering with the GPs. Therefore there may need to be some negotiation around practice fees to support and safeguard this vital community pharmacy network.

Implementation of the Electronic Prescription Transfer Service, Release 2 will enable patients to nominate which pharmacy their prescriptions are sent to. So they may choose to send their regular repeat prescriptions to a pharmacy close to where they live so they can collect the medicine on their way home from work or at weekend. However, for acute prescriptions they may choose to have them sent to a pharmacy close to where they work so they can pick up the medicines as soon as possible. The system would need to allow for this choice to be exercised. Ensuring patients sign pharmacy nomination forms for each GP surgery to know where to send the electronic prescriptions could add complications. In addition, if patients use a pharmacy near to where they live to collect items at the weekend, this may sever the link with local GPs which is usually greatly to the advantage of the patient as pharmacists build up good relationships with their local GP practices and can often pop round to the surgery to sort out issues for the patients.

This consultation underlines the need for the production of the Summary Care Record (SCR). The SCR will be a great advantage to patients and the public as all healthcare professionals involved in the individual patient's care can use it to ensure that the patient receives the best treatment at all times. The SCR will aid convenience and choice as well as improve access to services. Because patients accessing a GP practice near work may then use that pharmacy rather than their usual local pharmacy close to where they live, the pharmacists will also require comprehensive SCR access.

GP practices should NOT be allowed to refuse to register a patient if the potential patient has a number of health issues.

Yours sincerely

Lindsey Gilpin
Chair of the English Pharmacy Board
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain