

RPS CEO Paul Bennett opens the RPS annual conference 2017

'Ladies and gentleman, fellow pharmacists, and friends of pharmacy it is my absolute pleasure to open the years annual RPS Conference and welcome you all to what is going to be a fantastic two days of learning, networking, and I hope for us all, a re-energising experience.

For those that don't know me I'm Paul Bennett, the Chief Executive of RPS and, as a pharmacist myself, I am passionate about the advancement of the science and practice of pharmacy. Like you I am looking forward to updating my own knowledge about our profession over the next two days.

I'll be handing over to our President shortly but before then I'd like to share some reflections with you of my experience of being at the Society over the last two months and give some thoughts about where we will be heading in future.

Firstly, we have within the some of the very best people it has been my pleasure to work with Working with great people, who are hugely talented and highly motivated to support our members makes my job not only somewhat simpler but means you can be assured that the advocacy work, the products and services that we deliver at the Society are absolutely first class.

From the jewels of the output from our excellent team in publishing, such as the BNF and Medicines Complete to name but two, to the professional development programmes for all stages of your career and the advocacy work that we do for the profession, I have been extremely impressed not only by the quality but also the sheer quantity of the work we are doing on behalf of our members and the profession.

But we are not going to be resting on our laurels, we can of course always improve and that starts by making you and your professional ambitions the absolute centre of our focus.

Let me take a few moments to set out how I intend to address that.

Firstly, we need to get better at engagement, both with pharmacists individually, local groups and specialists, whether its connecting with Society on line or face to face - I want you to feel as much a part of the Society as I now do.

I hope the decision to open up access to the Conference to all members signals that we are absolutely committed to making sure we see more of you, and that you see, hear and experience more of what the Society has to offer.

Secondly, I know that like me you want the profession to be recognised and regarded highly in both the corridors of power within Government and the NHS as well as by fellow health professionals, patients and the public we serve.

I'm delighted that later in the Conference we will be hearing from the new Minister with responsibility for pharmacy in England, Mr Steve Brine MP. In addition to pharmacy, the Ministers other responsibilities include primary care, public health and service transformation. We are keen to build a dialogue about the future of the profession and know we have a responsibility to make sure the voice of pharmacy is heard, especially right now when times are tough for everyone working in healthcare, and we are absolutely committed to making sure that happens.

I am also very pleased to be able to announce that we are currently finalising arrangements for Professor Gino Martini to join the RPS as our new Chief Scientist. I and my colleagues are committed to raising the profile of Science and Research within the Society and Professor Martini will report directly to me.

In addition, I am delighted to confirm the appointment of Dr Claire Thompson as Deputy Chief Scientist, who will help me ensure that science and research remain fundamental to the work we do. Claire will join our existing Assistant Chief Scientist, Colin Cable to help strengthen our work on pharmaceutical science and they will both report to Gino. I am very excited about both of these appointments and look forward to welcoming our new colleagues into the Society.

Lastly, advocacy for the profession needs to be complemented with really practical one to one support for you - as a pharmacist, as an individual, whatever stage of your career you are at.

We know that next year the General Pharmaceutical Council will launch a new revalidation process for pharmacists and understandably some members may feel anxious about this change.

The Society will be ready to help all pharmacists with this new challenge, making sure that whether you're a locum, an academic, a hospital pharmacist or community pharmacist you will be 'revalidation ready.'

Our support for revalidation will also allow all pharmacists to consider how to continue their professional development, supporting your career aspirations

Let me close by offering you all an invitation, and that is to speak me or to a member of my team over this next two days about how we can support you, help you with your professional development and speak up for the profession. I'd be keen to know what you think we are doing right, but I also want to hear what you think we can do better or differently. As I said at the beginning, the Society needs to personify our member's ambitions, we need to do that by working with all pharmacists,

I look forward to working with you all on meeting this aim.

Thank you very much.