The new professional body’s website

In the 15th article on the new professional body for pharmacy, Mary Snell, pharmacist and online manager at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, reports on what members of the new body can expect to receive from the new website that is under development.

The development of the new website for the professional leadership body’s online services is now well under way. The new site, designed with members in mind, will be the home for the services outlined on the new professional body engagement site at www.pharmacyplb.com. So what will the new website offer members?

In response to the Transitional Committee’s prospectus in November 2008, we have been developing an online strategy for the new professional body. A series of workshops explored members’ expectations of a website provided by a supportive membership body. Thanks to input from pharmacists across the profession, these workshops helped identify the content and functionality needed on the new site.

We continue to work closely with members to create a website that meets the needs and wants of members. The new site will be highly interactive, with content being generated by members and staff. Members will be able to use the virtual networks and local practice forums that are currently being set up and piloted. Certain areas of the site will be restricted to members. This is how the new body will deliver special benefits and services to its members exclusively.

Lessons learnt

We are also responding to lessons we have learnt from the current Royal Pharmaceutical Society website, www.rpsgb.org. Although the site carries a vast amount of valuable material, it is not always easy to find what you are looking for. The new professional body site will be presented in an improved, more user-friendly, form.

There is, notably, an extensive amount of valuable material on the existing Society site. This material carries a vast amount of valuable material, and it is not always easy to find what you are looking for. The new professional body site will be presented in an improved, more user-friendly, form.

The development of the new website is currently under way. A range of virtual networks and local practice forums will be developed, and these will be available online.

Panel 1: Development of the new website

- September 2009 (already live)
  - New structure and new (interim) design
  - Update on plans for continuing professional development support material, mentoring service and information and advisory service
  - Pilots for virtual networks
- October 2009
  - Pilots for local practice forums
  - Events registration and online payment
- January 2010
  - Virtual networks and local practice forums: live sites roll out
- By April 2010
  - Membership database integrated
  - Purchase of publications; content; events; membership
  - Access to e-learning materials and assessments
  - Mentoring service integrated with membership database

Panel 2: Plan for virtual networks and local practice forums

The Transcom prospectus promised that the new professional body would look for new ways for pharmacists to come together, for example, by creating virtual communities through web-based technology, to exchange experience and knowledge easily, wherever they were.

The virtual networks project started in July 2009 and involves ongoing discussion with the membership. It aims to create virtual networks with benefits and features that would appeal to existing Society members, pharmacist special interest groups, the new local practice forums and external groups covering specialist areas of pharmacy practice, eg, clinical groups.

Virtual networks will be accessible to individual pharmacists and groups of pharmacists in any geographical location across Great Britain, and will allow all members to communicate and share ideas. The networks will also be a vehicle for publicising events, sending/receiving appropriate alert messages and disseminating best practice.

Following the Society’s liaison with the membership to explore user requirements, an early prototype was rolled out to a range of pilot groups from September to December 2009. They will involve the Industrial Pharmacists Group committee, Society Qualified Person assessors, the Secure Environment Pharmacists Group, the Academic Pharmacists Group committee, national pharmacy boards, hospital chief pharmacist networks and a local practice forum. Feedback from the pilots will help define the user requirements before the formal roll-out of virtual networks in early 2010.

In addition, a virtual network user group, including stakeholders from the pilot groups, is being set up to provide ongoing feedback on future member requirements.

Get involved

If you would like to get involved in the development of the professional body, go to www.pharmacyplb.com and click on “Get involved”.

www.pjonline.com