How the new body will promote advanced and specialist practice

In the 18th article on the new professional body for pharmacy, Carol Evans, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s head of professional development, outlines the proposed governance structure for advanced and specialist pharmacy practice.

The new professional body will take the lead to work with the profession, across all sectors and in all three GB countries, to formalise the development of advanced and specialist practice (ASP). The ASP project aims to create a set of portable, nationally recognised professional designations that acknowledge advanced and specialist pharmacy practice across all sectors. These designations, once obtained, would represent a consistent level of advancement regardless of sector of practice and would be recognised when moving from job to job.

Phase 1
A proposed governance structure has been developed by the project team in consultation with a wide stakeholder reference group of more than 150 pharmacists representing most specialisms. The structure will ensure quality and robust assessment across the sectors and specialisms. This will start with basic proposals, pending agreement from the transition working group.

The proposal is for a specialist curriculum committee (SCC) to accredit the curricula and ensure they are robust. A professional assessment board (PAB) will award the professional designations and ensure the quality of candidates coming through the various levels of advancement. The specialist groups (SGs) will define the knowledge and skills relevant for their specialty (curriculum). We are also looking at the possibility of using the validated frameworks to support general, advanced and consultant level practice — the general level framework (GLF) and the advanced and consultant level frameworks (ACLF) frameworks — by working in collaboration with the Competency Development and Evaluation Group (CoDEG; www.codeg.org) and adapting these when necessary. The proposal to use the existing frameworks rather than reinvent them has been strongly supported by the profession.

Phase 2
In consultation with the membership phase 2 will seek to define the professional designations, framework approach and standard processes, and establish the governance groups. The aim is for there to be up to four levels of advancement that can be achieved throughout a career. Level 1 could be gained soon after registration, in the early years of practice, regardless of sector. This could potentially link to the GLF representing general practice in whichever pharmacy sector people are in. For example, after a few years, a pharmacist could potentially achieve the professional designation “practitioner” in pharmacy in community, hospital or industry. This would be dependent on demonstrating the appropriate level of knowledge and skills.

At the highest level (4), the professional designation could be “consultant” level or above and relate to the relevant ACLF competencies and the relevant curriculum in a specialism or consultant level general practice — again across all sectors.

An individual would have to demonstrate: leadership and expertise in their area of practice; the ability to manage at a high level; skill in educating and training; and skill in undertaking and disseminating research in practice. The area of expert practice could be in a speciality such as respiratory medicine or general practice, but at consultant level.

Developing appropriate terminology is important so that expert practice covers all areas of clinical pharmacy in hospital and community sectors, management at a high level, industry and academia. To get this right, subsequent meetings with all stakeholders will continue, followed by extensive market research and consultation with the profession.

Next steps
This project is in the early stages and much work is still needed to further engage the profession, and employers, to ensure national and cross-sector endorsement.

The ASP project started with a clean sheet, enabling the profession to decide what it wants, and this will continue. Members of the project team have been chosen to represent the wider pharmacy profession, and the virtual stakeholder reference group extends this network further. The proposed role, remit and operating model for the specialist curriculum committee, the professional assessment board and the specialist groups can be seen in the Figure. These may evolve into professional curriculum committee and professional groups and professional assessment board, pending discussions and consultation. We have worked with a wide cross-section of the profession around this governance structure. More information is available at www.pharmacyplb.com/ProfessionalDevelopmentAndEducation.aspx.

Get involved
If you are interested in being on the virtual stakeholder reference group please contact Carol Evans, head of professional development, at carol.evans@rpsgb.org.

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

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