

## Executive summary

### Chapter 4 - Pharmacy technicians – a European outlook

In 2004, a report was published of a comparative study on pharmacy staff groups in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden. It was commissioned by the Department of Health. The findings of this study were considered and the current situation in those countries was re-examined, as well as taking a look at practice in Europe more broadly.

In some European countries, those in pharmacy technician roles are trained to graduate level and there, the role is much more advanced, involving significantly more responsibility and a commensurate remuneration structure. In European countries where additional roles and responsibilities are assumed by those in comparable pharmacy technician roles, those individuals are supported by higher standards of clinical governance. For example, they are able to rely upon original pack dispensing and bar code checking to assist with dispensing accuracy; the transfer of prescriptions from surgery to pharmacy is accompanied by additional clinical information such as the indication of the medicine, and the staffing levels in individual pharmacies are much higher than typically seen in the UK.

In mainland Europe, the majority of pharmacies are still owned by pharmacists and the extent of corporatisation is not as advanced as it is in the UK. Consequently, there is much less focus upon corporate profit objectives and a greater emphasis on professional considerations.

Developing policies regarding skill mix and the use of pharmacy technicians based upon the successful models in operation in mainland Europe or elsewhere, without seriously considering the whole system differences and deficiencies of the UK community pharmacy environment in comparison, creates a significant risk of damaging the integrity and standards of the service and a risk to public safety.