



Martin Astbury

The PDA has offered candidates of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) National Board Elections 2024 in England and Wales the opportunity to tell PDA members their views on key issues. Below is Martin Astbury's response:

1. What would you hope to achieve over the course of your office, if elected?

My Job continues to be as a pharmacist working at the coal face looking after my patients and the community we serve. Additionally, I've held senior roles within the profession which means I am equally confident when speaking to Ministers or driving through the members views at board level.

If I had not used my experience to fight for pharmacists over the last few years then Pharmacies Without Pharmacists would probably now be a reality.

The RPS boards need someone with a strong voice, someone who can influence what is happening and is not afraid to put their head above the parapet.

GPhC fees impact on small contractors, hospital, primary care, industry, those working in GP surgeries, locum, and part time pharmacists. Registrants' fees should come down as we should not be subsidising the premises fee.

The board should be using its influence to reduce sweat shop pharmacies and the workload heaped on pharmacists, in all sectors.

Responsible pharmacists must be paid when they are signed in as an absent RP. If an employer doesn't want to pay the RP then the RP signs off and the pharmacy closes.

I want to ensure that any governance changes at the RPS still leave pharmacist members with ultimate control, not handed over to appointed incompetents!

2. The RPS ceased to be the regulator over a decade ago and therefore membership became optional. It has refused to publicly declare its membership numbers for several years, even when asked to do so at its own annual meetings. The membership figure of "26,137 paying members" was given in the RPS Annual report 2022 and this is a rare insight for members. What is your view on transparency and in particular the declaration of membership numbers in future?

I will be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that I take. I will give reasons for my decisions and restrict information only when appropriate to do so. Overall membership figures should be given.

3. Should the RPS membership base remain exclusively for pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists, and pharmacy students/trainee pharmacists? Why?

The voting membership should remain as it is: reserved for pharmacists. To avoid confusion and conflicts the RPS's focus should remain as pharmacists and the public they serve.

I wouldn't have a problem with a friend's of the RPS paying category. For anyone with a pulse who is willing to pay us to find out what we're doing. They would obviously have no voting rights or be represented by the RPS.

4. Pharmacy technicians undoubtedly have an important role to play in supporting pharmacists through skill mix. However, the government seems keen instead to introduce pharmacist role substitution for example by giving pharmacy technicians' the rights to operate Patient Group Directions (PGDs). What views do you hold on this subject and in particular, do you believe the pharmacy technicians have the appropriate levels of training to independently deliver PGDs?

Two of my best friends are Accuracy Checking Pharmacy Technicians (I was their tutor) they are great at what they do, but it is done ultimately under the pharmacist's over all supervision. I am all for using our skill mix to the maximum.

However, PGDs and Pharmacy Technicians supervising the supply of prescription medicines is a dangerous down skilling and is a step towards pharmacies operating without a pharmacist.

5. Do you support the PDA's Safer Pharmacies Charter?

Yes, I support the PDA's Safer Pharmacies Charter.

6. What are your views on the UK Pharmacy Professional Leadership Advisory Board installed by the 4 country Chief Pharmaceutical Officers?

In my opinion, this is not needed, I believe that it appallingly consists of several hand-picked appointed cronies and in no way is representative or representing the profession.