



*Minesh Parbat*

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 Minesh Parbat's response:

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

One issue that deeply concerns and impassions me within the pharmacy profession and wider healthcare landscape is the persistent lack of funding, development opportunities, and workforce shortages. These challenges not only strain the resources available to pharmacists but also hinder their ability to deliver optimal patient care.

The scarcity of funding limits the implementation of essential support systems and exacerbating the already high levels of stress and burnout among pharmacists is a real concern for me. Furthermore, the limited development opportunities and workforce shortages restrict career advancement with an ever increasing workload. I am passionate about advocating for increased funding, expanding development programmes in independent prescribing, and strategies to address workforce shortages. By addressing these fundamental challenges, we can create a more sustainable and supportive environment for pharmacists, ensuring they can thrive personally and professionally while delivering the highest quality of care to patients in need.

**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?**

Promoting transparency is vital for building trust and accountability across industries, including pharmacy. While sharing membership numbers could enhance transparency, it's important to carefully assess the potential benefits against privacy considerations and competitive factors. Decisions should be made with thorough consideration of stakeholders' viewpoints, aiming to achieve a balance between accountability and confidentiality. The RPS has made progress in enhancing transparency, yet there's still room for improvement in supporting members and reaching out to non-members.

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

The exclusivity of the RPS membership base to pharmacists, pharmaceutical scientists, and pharmacy students/trainee pharmacists serves to maintain the integrity and focus of the organisation on the specific needs and interests of those within the pharmacy profession. Prioritising collaboration with pharmacy technician organisations is also important to ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing the diverse needs of the pharmacy sector.

Pharmacy technicians play a vital role in pharmacy practice, and effective collaboration with their organisations can provide valuable insights and perspectives that enhance the RPS's efforts. This focus allows the RPS to provide tailored support, resources, and advocacy efforts that directly benefit its members and contribute to the advancement of pharmacy practice and education.

**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?**

The question of whether pharmacy technicians have the appropriate training to independently deliver PGDs is complex and merits careful consideration. It's important to recognise that pharmacy technicians play a valuable role in the pharmacy healthcare system, and their training and skills continue to evolve. However, the decision to authorise pharmacy technicians to independently deliver PGDs should be based on thorough assessment of their training, competency, and scope of practice, ensuring patient safety and quality of care remain paramount.

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

I support the PDA's Safer Pharmacies Charter which is crucial for promoting patient safety and enhancing the quality of care within pharmacies. There remains significant work that needs to be done to ensure that the principles contained in this charter are actually being implemented. By adhering to the principles outlined in the charter, pharmacies can demonstrate their commitment to providing a safe environment for both patients and staff. Implementing the purpose advocated by the charter can help support staff to raise concerns, support their physical or mental health, and improve communication between healthcare professionals and patients. Overall, supporting the Safer Pharmacies Charter contributes to fostering trust in pharmacy services and ultimately improves healthcare outcomes.

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

The UK Pharmacy Professional Leadership Advisory Board, initiated by the Chief Pharmaceutical Officers of the four countries, marks a pivotal move towards fostering collaboration and enhancing leadership within the pharmacy field. By uniting stakeholders from across the UK, including pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and healthcare professionals, the board has the potential to address common challenges and drive positive change. Its inclusive approach allows for diverse perspectives, leading to more effective strategies for advancing pharmacy practice and patient care. With its advisory role, I would encourage the board to provide a valuable insight to inform policy development and decision-making at national and regional levels. Overall, this initiative represents a promising step in strengthening professional leadership and promoting excellence in pharmacy practice throughout the UK, and I would be encouraging the RPS to be at the forefront of any discussions and decisions.