



Nirusha Govender

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 Nirusha Govender's response:

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

The RPS national board's primary functions include:

- Professional Leadership
- Advocacy for Pharmacy Practice
- Advocacy for RPS members

I firmly believe that in order to make a positive impact on our profession, the time for change is now. Whilst we still have a long way to go in this transformational journey, I'm optimistic about the opportunities this brings to develop our profession whilst inspiring future generations to join the helm. I am determined to champion inclusive and authentic leadership through my own personal commitment to the Inclusive Pharmacy Practice principles and ensuring the interests and welfare of our members are at the forefront. I have always been passionate about pharmacy and maintain a purpose driven approach to anything I undertake or commit to. So from the outset of my election journey, I have been keen to engage personally with RPS members to understand "what matters most to our members." I have met with some members and also developed a survey. There have been some interesting themes that have emerged from the responses and I plan to explore these further with an intimate focus group in the coming days. For any members who are interested please see find the link to my survey [here](#) and the link to join the focus group is [here](#).

With this mindset and practice of advocacy through being a voice for change, if successful, I am confident that I have the ability to genuinely advocate for members and the profession whilst ensuring the best interests of the public.

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?

Transparency in any organisation is important to build trust and accountability. My understanding is that the RPS does publish membership data in its annual report. However, I am aware that the [independent survey and review](#) conducted on communications in 2022 had identified that RPS members wanted more communication and improved engagement from the organisation. Many members felt that increasing transparency was crucial and providing clear communication and assurance that governance processes are followed was an essential part of this. In my personal opinion, this is probably where the focus of transparency needs to improve to foster a culture of

openness with members thereby instilling more confidence in the membership to become more vocal and proactive in the future.

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

Our profession is undergoing immense transformation and it is therefore imperative that we unite and support more inclusive pharmacy practice considering that the RPS mission is to put pharmacy at the forefront of healthcare. So I would definitely support and welcome the opportunity to include pharmacy technicians in the membership in the future as it would be more advantageous for us to be more cohesive and united as a profession thereby strengthening our voice too. However, this is my personal opinion and I feel it is important to undertake more robust stakeholder engagement to hear the voices of existing RPS members as well as the voices of pharmacy technicians to support a more informed decision-making process in the future.

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?

I personally do not view this as role substitution. Skill mix is vitally important in delivering modern and efficient pharmacy services. Increasing the opportunities for pharmacy technicians to further develop their role has the potential to strengthen the foundation for pharmacy practice across all sectors. I firmly believe that in order for successful futureproofing of our workforce to support professional leadership we need to support the development of all pharmacy staff and not just pharmacists. Read my recently published [letter to the PJ Editor](#). Enabling pharmacy technicians to undertake further services under a PGD will increase capacity for pharmacy teams and further support consistency of services being offered within pharmacy. It is for these reasons that I fully agree and support the [RPS response](#) to the recent government consultation on this.

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

I fully support and endorse the PDA's Safer Pharmacies Charter and will endeavour to champion this through any work undertaken by the RPS that supports the Charter objectives. However, I feel that it is not just the duty of the professional standards organisation or regulator to support this but more importantly for employers to commit to these objectives too. There is more work required to ensure that key actions are taken by all employers to bring these objectives to the forefront of daily practice to support the wellbeing of our pharmacy workforce and ultimately in delivering high-quality care which promotes patient safety.

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

The formation of the UK Pharmacy Professional Leadership Advisory Board is an integral step in our transformation journey. It is an important initiative that will further support, enable and empower the Professional Leadership Bodies and Specialist Professional Groups to shape and lead the future for

the pharmacy professions. Whilst it still early days to understand how they will aim to achieve the recommendations and ambitious vision set out by the UK Commission, it's refreshing to see an inclusive and diverse board from across the professions that have great potential to collaborate, unite and shape the future of pharmacy professional leadership.