



Sorbi Khattak

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 Sorbi Khattak's response:

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

Upon re-election, I aim to continue my active role as an English Pharmacy Board and Assembly member for the RPS, promote transparency in decision making and advocate for the advancement of the pharmacy profession. I aspire to help strengthen the relationships between all

sectors of pharmacy and increase collaboration as we drive the society into the future.

In the past year, I have actively supported the RPS' executive team towards governance decisions and strategies which uphold integrity and effectiveness of the organisation in serving its members and broader community.

My goal is to contribute to the evolution of pharmacy whilst honouring values such as authenticity, education, innovation and inclusion & diversity.

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?

My view primarily centres around the importance of openness and accountability instilled in me as a pharmacist. I believe in advocating for transparent communication which showcases membership numbers and therefore highlights areas for future collaboration with our members in order to make them feel valued and part of this community. Emphasising the value of transparency can also help ensure that the society remains responsive to the evolving needs of its members and effectively represents their interests.

With a casual vacancy, I am yet to fully influence all decisions made within the organisation, however, it is to my knowledge that the membership numbers have been released.

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

As an early career pharmacist, it was not too long before I was a foundation trainee (pre-registration trainee) and a student myself. Currently, my focus is on empowering and supporting our members in their professional development, in particular; early career pharmacists, and ensuring that as an organisation we get the mission and the vision right.

As an advocate for inclusion and diversity, I am certainly open to opening our membership to wider roles. This is also in line with other Royal Colleges and professional membership organisations and may enhance the Society's advocacy efforts by amplifying its voice on broader healthcare issues that intersect with pharmacy practice.

Expanding membership could foster collaboration and interdisciplinary exchange and allows us to explore an area of development, learning and collaboration that we may be currently missing. However, any expansion of membership should not compromise the needs of its existing members.

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 subject surrounding the role of pharmacy technicians is complex and requires careful consideration of various factors. Both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are equally valuable members of the pharmacy and wider multidisciplinary teams.

As for any professional in a patient-facing setting, it is crucial to only deliver products or services based on an adequate level of training, competence and regulatory framework. Furthermore, this requires an assessment of the individual's training, competence and regulatory oversight to ensure that they can effectively fulfill this role.

At the moment, I do not feel that we can exercise this judgment. Whilst I am supportive of upskilling our pharmacy technicians, there are implications and risk(s) involved to the patient and as a result we may compromise our duty of care to our patients. This separation of service provision shouldn't divide our pharmacy teams but reinforce public trust towards patient safety and therefore our profession.

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

I believe that it's an extremely important initiative to help support pharmacists and pharmacy teams in providing safe and effective care. I am supportive of any initiative that puts our patient safety and the public safety first.

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

Having joined the profession fairly recently as an early career's pharmacist, I have seen pharmacy change enormously in the past 5 years. I am supportive of bringing all the pharmacy bodies together providing that they give the autonomy and respect to the profession that it deserves. I also hope that this instalment includes authentic leadership that is not influenced by political powers or external bodies with a view to control the pharmacy workforce. Pharmacists and pharmacy teams should be at the forefront of all decision-making.

I look forward to the UK Pharmacy Professional Leadership Advisory Board helping us to achieve this and I am proud of the work that the Royal Pharmaceutical Society has achieved this year in collaboration with the UK Pharmacy Professional Leadership Advisory Board and the plans set forward for 2024/2025 onwards.