



*Tase Oputu*

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 Tase Oputu's response:

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

If re-elected I will be able to complete my term as the Chair of EPB, I aim to ensure the Board functions effectively, amplify the voices of Board members. I plan to make the Board and its work more accessible to members (I have started this through the video updates and meetings outside of the default location of London). I also want to establish a closer

relationship between RPS and BPSA so that our future pharmacists feel they belong and are supported at all stages of their career. It is not a secret that I am deeply committed to promoting inclusion and enhancing diversity.

Throughout my first term, I have put significant efforts into establishing an internal strategy within the RPS for inclusion and diversity. I firmly believe that we cannot demand improvements from other organisations while failing to implement them ourselves. I will continue to ensure that the Assembly exercises vigilance and accountability in monitoring its implementation and progress towards achieving results.

I will also be steadfast in the call for a structural transformation to enable a speedy transition to a Royal College designation. I believe this will go towards empowering the RPS with the necessary credibility and recognition to steer the profession.

**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?**

While the disclosure of membership figures is one way to indicate transparency, it is essential to acknowledge that this is not the sole or most significant measure. The annual report provides access to membership figures, among other things. For me, engaging with members is the key to mitigating the perception that transparency is lacking. We must make it simple for members to obtain information, resources, express opinions, and be aware that their feedback is being heard. Some of the systems we currently have in place require improvement, and I have, and will continue to support and advocate for improvements to the website and the app as well as face to face events where possible.

Throughout my first term, I have been vocal in calling for openness in the work of the RPS and supported calls for ensuring that only the most sensitive items are placed on the confidential agenda, and meetings are recorded. During my term, we conducted a communication and engagement review, resulting in numerous actions that, as an Assembly member, I am committed to ensuring are followed up on, as this will significantly decrease the perception that the RPS is not a transparent organisation.

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

I believe the membership base should remain as is, however I do not perceive any issues with affiliate/associate membership -particularly for gaining access to important pharmacy resources.

### **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?**

It's time to change the outdated narrative that suggests that Pharmacy Technicians are trying to encroach on Pharmacist roles. The rapidly evolving pace of change in Pharmacy necessitates the need for capacity and flexibility within pharmacy teams to provide services in the present and in the future.

Pharmacy Technicians are recognised as pharmacy professionals in their own right and are regulated by the GPhC. They are required to operate within the limits of their knowledge and skills. While concerns may exist regarding the preparedness of some Pharmacy Technicians to take on new roles, their regulation by the GPhC ensures that they only operate within the confines of their knowledge and skills.

Encouraging more individuals to become Pharmacy Technicians and supporting efforts to enhance every aspect of initial and post-registration training and working conditions is essential. It is also important to ensure that employers do not exploit the use of PGDs by Pharmacy Technicians for financial gain. The use of PGDs must only be justified by clinical need and must have clear governance and accountability arrangements in place.

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

I expressed my support for this charter when it was brought to the EPB. It is a set of principles aimed at fostering a safe working environment and improving patient safety. For me it is important to consider why (despite the existence of the PDA Charter, the MEP, RPS and GPhC professional standards) individuals and employers fail to comply.

I will continue to champion and support the RPS work and advocacy on issues such as Inclusion, Wellbeing, protected learning time, rest breaks -all of these indicate support for the Charter's fundamental objectives.

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

Over the last couple of years, my perspective on the UK Pharmacy Professional Leadership Board (UKPPLAB) has evolved. Initially, I viewed it as a scathing critique of the ability of the RPS to lead the profession. I believe it served as a necessary wake-up call for the RPS to assess its efficacy, recognize its blind spots, observe its surroundings, and establish an action plan to address its shortcomings -this has resulted in the recent governance review.

As the healthcare landscape in the UK rapidly shifts after the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a growing recognition from both the government and the public of the unique position and value of pharmacy in providing healthcare. To leverage this momentum, it is imperative that we embrace the opportunities, speak with a unified voice, and establish credibility.

In my current opinion, the UKPPLAB plays a critical role in unifying a fragmented landscape of pharmacy and it is important that the RPS stays involved. Furthermore, the recommendations of the recent review of the RPS's governance structure must be viewed in context of the UKPPLAB's objectives. The synergy between the two entities promises to be extremely beneficial for pharmacy and patients alike.

The transparency and inclusivity of the UKPPLAB, in my view, have room for improvement. While the inclusion of pharmacy technicians is commendable, the absence of pharmaceutical scientists is disappointing, and I urge reconsideration. The establishment of the board, along with the imminent release of its terms of reference and work plan, is a positive development. However, it is essential to scrutinise these terms to ensure that political interference is not possible. It is also worth considering whether the LAB's scope is extensive enough to encompass the industrial pharmacy sector. Given the growing life sciences and research agendas, we cannot afford to create another imbalance across the sectors.