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Welcome message

Dear Pharmacist,

This month's newsletter includes an update from PSI President Paul Fahey regarding recent decisions by the PSI Council in relation to its headquarters.

This month also has advice in relation to the management of medicines shortages. This issue is being addressed by the relevant agencies through the Medication Safety Forum which is seeking to identify and implement procedures to improve the management of medicines shortages when they do occur.

We are also flagging upcoming public consultations the PSI will be conducting this year and we encourage members of the profession to participate in these consultations.

Finally, following on from the recent official launch of the new Irish Institute of Pharmacy, next month's pharmacist newsletter will update the profession on the ongoing developments and address some of the profession's frequently asked questions around the introduction of the formal structures for CPD.

Message from President re PSI headquarters

Dear Pharmacist,

I wish to update the profession in relation to strategic decisions that have been made by the PSI Council in relation to its headquarters.

In 2008 the Council reviewed the existing arrangements whereby the staff of the PSI were operating from two separate premises at 18 Shrewsbury Road and 37 Northumberland Road, Dublin. The Council was mindful of the need for premises which would facilitate and support its role in the ongoing development of the profession and provide facilities for the PSI to improve its engagement with pharmacists, patients and other stakeholders.

As part of this review the Council also took into account the need for a suitable premises in a convenient location which would raise the profile of the profession in Ireland and internationally taking into account that Ireland will be hosting the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Congress from 31 August to 5 September 2013 where it is expected that over 3,000 pharmacists and pharmaceutical scientists will visit Dublin.

Following on from this review the Council decided to dispose of its existing properties in Northumberland and Shrewsbury Roads and these sales are now complete. The PSI has bought an existing office building in Fenian Street, Dublin 2 which it intends to move into later this year following some necessary refurbishments.

These include the provision of suitable facilities to hold educational or other meetings with pharmacists, a library resource for pharmacists and the public and some necessary refurbishments which will enhance the energy efficiency and sustainability of the building into the future. The PSI Council has asked me to reassure the profession that the surplus arising from the move from its existing premises will be set aside for *"the development of education, research or any other public purpose connected with pharmacy"* as set out in paragraph 12 of schedule 1 of the Pharmacy Act 2007.

The PSI offices will shortly be moving from Shrewsbury Road into a temporary office facility in Dublin city centre close to Fenian Street pending completion of the refurbishments. All PSI telephone numbers and email addresses will remain the same during this move into the new premises and you will be further updated on the move and new address in due course.

I look forward to updating you further later in the year on progress on the relocation, and it is expected that the new headquarters will serve the needs of the PSI, the pharmacy profession and public for many years to come.

Advice on managing medicines shortages

Managing medicines shortages is a common challenge in pharmacy practice, not only in Ireland but worldwide. As stated in a recent [press release from the International Pharmaceutical Federation \(FIP\)](#) medicines are not simple items of commerce - they are an essential component of patient care - and a variety of stakeholders including the pharmacy profession can contribute to improving the continued supply of medicines.

The causes of medicines shortages are usually beyond the control of an individual pharmacist. However, as front line healthcare professionals, pharmacists play a critical role in managing, advising and assisting patients who may be affected by such shortages. The Department of Health, along with the HSE and the Irish Medicines Board (IMB), have been working to identify and implement procedures to improve the management of medicines shortages when they do occur, and the PSI are contributing to this ongoing work. The IMB for example has recently reminded all holders of wholesaler authorisation of their public service obligations to ensure that, in relation to the medicines available to them, meeting the needs of patients in Ireland is a priority.

Patients and prescribers will often rely on the pharmacist as a source of key information related to their decision-making, including clinical or cost information about available alternatives. From a patient safety perspective, decisions should be made on an individual patient basis; however if an agreement is made with a prescriber for a group of patients, it is important that interventions are appropriately recorded and documented for each individual patient.

The following information is intended to be helpful to superintendent and supervising pharmacists devising their policies and procedures, including enhanced communication between pharmacists within a pharmacy practice.

A five-step approach to managing shortages

- 1. 1. Identify useful sources of reliable information.** Access to sources of up-to-date, reliable information on medicines shortages greatly help with the efficient and effective management of the issue. Information about individual medicines or the availability of alternatives can be accessed via wholesalers, manufacturers, special suppliers or agents, or the IMB. A full listing of authorised medicines is available on the IMB website www.imb.ie. Irish based offices of pharmaceutical companies can be good sources of information specific to the Irish market. The National Medicines Information Centre (NMIC) www.nmic.ie is a useful resource. Other pharmacist colleagues, pharmacist representative organisations or drug database suppliers are also useful sources of information in this regard.
- 1. 2. Check other sources of supply.** These may include other wholesalers, directly from manufacturer or agent or a specials supplier. In many circumstances another pharmacy may be able to supply – [please refer to PSI Guidelines on Sourcing, Storage and Disposal of Medicinal Products \(Section 3.1.3 of Sourcing\)](#) for guidance on the appropriate steps. Information about costs, including any additional costs, from another supplier or the reimbursement status of an alternative medicine should be clarified as this may impact on patient or prescriber decision-making.
- 3. Determine if an alternative medicine may be appropriate.** There may be acceptable alternative brand or generic medicines available, or another formulation which may be suitable taking into account any bioavailability differences which may require dosage adjustments. Alternatively, there may be an unauthorised product which may be appropriate to consider.
- 4. Consult with prescriber, especially for critical medicines.** Good communication and cooperation between the pharmacist and the prescriber is essential to ensure that a patient-focused approach is taken. Pharmacists have a key role in providing information on medicine shortages issues and advice on suitable and available alternatives. Discussions with prescribers and interventions made should be appropriately documented, for example in the patient's PMR or clinical record. All relevant legal requirements relating to

prescriptions or record-keeping should be adhered to and clarified with the prescriber where necessary. In particular, where an alternative medicine proposed is an unlicensed medicine, the prescriber should be aware of this and the discussion appropriately documented - please refer to PSI Guidelines on Sourcing, [Storage and Disposal of Medicinal Products \(Section 3.2.3 of Sourcing\)](#) for further guidance.

5. **Communicate clearly and reassure affected patients.** When dealing with a medicines shortage the importance of patient-centred care comes to the fore. It is important that patients' confidence in their medicines is maintained and that they are reassured about any alternative medicines supplied and about how their individual needs are being dealt with. It is important to keep patients informed of any developments, including timelines when normal supply is expected to resume, and to involve them in decision-making as appropriate. All patients should be advised of the importance of not missing doses of essential or critical medicines and the importance of liaising with the pharmacist to ensure their continuity of care and treatment. Ensure that you have relevant contact numbers of patients and that they know how to contact the pharmacy should they have any queries or seek further advice or assistance.

PSI Consultations 2012

The PSI would like to thank all the pharmacists who participated in its recent public consultations, in particular the consultation on the draft core competency framework for pharmacists. We would like to inform pharmacists that we will be conducting a number of public consultation processes in 2012.

Premises and Equipment Guidelines

The first of these will begin in late April and will be in relation to draft guidelines on the Premises and Equipment requirements of a retail pharmacy business. These guidelines are the next in the series of guidelines being developed by the PSI to facilitate compliance with the relevant requirements of the Regulation of Retail Pharmacy Businesses Regulations 2008 (S.I. No. 488 of 2008).

Baseline Study of Hospital Pharmacy Practice

Also in the near future, survey questionnaires in relation to the baseline survey of hospital pharmacy practice in Ireland will be issued to hospital pharmacists. This online survey will be conducted by Horwath Bastow Charleton (HBC) on behalf of the PSI and is a similar study to the one carried out in respect of [community pharmacy practice in 2010](#). This study will be an important opportunity to ascertain the views of pharmacists practising in hospital settings in order to inform policy development and to provide an understanding of the nature and type of services currently being delivered by hospital pharmacists in Ireland. Further information about the survey, along with a link to the questionnaire and individual access codes, will be issued to hospital pharmacists in the coming weeks.

Pharmacy Education and CPD Accreditation Standards

Later this year the PSI will also be conducting public consultations in relation to accreditation standards for the fully integrated five-year Masters programme and in relation to accreditation standards against which formal programmes of CPD education and training will be evaluated on behalf of the PSI. (The PSI Council approved generic interim accreditation standards for CPD programmes for pharmacy in Ireland in 2011, along with additional accreditation standards specific to seasonal influenza vaccination training programmes for pharmacists, in the context of the introduction of the vaccination service in pharmacies last autumn.)

Posters for FIP 2012

The closing date for submitting abstracts for posters or short communications at the 2012 International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) congress is **now 1st May**. The congress will be held in Amsterdam from 3rd to 8th October. The abstract form, along with guidelines on preparing your abstract and poster and further information, is available on the [FIP website](#).

The PSI would like to hear from any pharmacists in Ireland who may be travelling to

FIP 2012 in October. Further information about this year's event is available on the [FIP website](#).

As the 2013 FIP congress will be held in Dublin, pharmacists in Ireland are also encouraged to start thinking now about submitting a poster for next year's conference, as this will be a unique opportunity to showcase pharmacy practice and research in Ireland across all areas of practice.

EuroPREvent 2012

EuroPREvent is the Annual Congress of the European Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation and the premier international forum for preventive cardiology. This year EuroPREvent is being held in the Convention Centre Dublin from the 3rd-5th of May.

At this year's event, the new European Guidelines on the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease in Clinical Practice (version 2012) will be announced, along with dedicated educational and implementation programmes including an online interactive learning tool for healthcare professionals. This widens the relevance of the meeting to include pharmacists and other healthcare professionals involved in and with an interest in prevention of cardiovascular disease, as well as voluntary bodies, health planners, local and international politicians, Departments of Health and health service providers. The event will also be used to focus on heart health prevention policy in Ireland and to raise the profile of CVD prevention initiatives here.

Further information about the conference is available on the [European Society of Cardiology website](#).

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