Community Pharmacy Scotland

Community Pharmacy Scotland (formerly known as the Scottish Pharmaceutical General Council) is the body recognised to represent the owners of Scotland’s 1216 community pharmacies in negotiations with the Scottish Government on remuneration and terms of service relating to the provision of NHS pharmaceutical care services. Within our membership we represent all types of pharmacy, multiple or independent, situated throughout Scotland including a number of pharmacies in remote and rural locations.

Our prime focus in recent years has been the development of a new contract for pharmacy contractors, one which will call for the delivery of new services, potentially in novel ways, but continuing to place emphasis on the opportunity which community pharmacy offers in terms of access for patients to health care services.

Evidence

Community Pharmacy Scotland does not have a view on whether this Bill should be approved. However, we have several concerns around the mechanics of what is proposed.

Community Pharmacy Scotland is concerned about the impact of the Bill if approved on other non-medical healthcare professionals. The Bill appears to make no reference to the implications on other non-medical healthcare professionals.

The most likely chosen route of ending life we believe is injection of high dose opiates and barbiturates or insulin. It is not clear from the Bill how it is intended to source any medicines that may be required to end life. The supply of medicines is currently governed by the Medicines Act 1968 and the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (as amended). These acts are reserved legislation and there is a need to examine where precedence lies and if supplies for this purpose are permitted.

The practitioner who is involved in the decision making process throughout is aware of the intention; the pharmacist supplying the medicines used may be unaware of the intended use. Pharmacists and prescribers are however, 50% liable for any supply made.

Community Pharmacy Scotland is concerned that whilst the patient is satisfied that seeking to end their life is their chosen path, families of the patient may not be as satisfied that this decision is appropriate.

Community Pharmacy Scotland is keen the committee investigates implications for pharmacists supplying medicines that are used to terminate life and any legal implications (liability or prosecution) that may arise if a family is unhappy with the supply of medicines made.
The current Code of Ethics from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain also supports pharmacists in allowing them to refer patients to alternative providers for treatment if they believe a professional service breaches their religious or moral beliefs.

Community Pharmacy Scotland proposes that this Bill should make it mandatory for a prescriber to ensure that any requisition for medicines to be used in termination is marked clearly as being for this purpose. This will allow pharmacists to make an appropriate professional decision on the supply of medication.

Community Pharmacy Scotland would like the End of Life Assistance Bill committee to consider the issues raised and is keen to hear feedback on the way forward.

Dr Elspeth Weir
Head of Policy & Development
Community Pharmacy Scotland

29/04/2010