

A Call To Arms – how pharmacists can help shape the future

Rachael Patel, Community Pharmacist, Barnet

I was lucky enough to be given the opportunity to attend this year's HSRPP (Health Services Research and pharmacy practice) conference¹ by NoCLoR (North Central London Research Consortium), to whom I am very thankful. The vast majority of delegates were actively involved in research in pharmacy and related practice, either on a full or part time basis.

So why is research relevant to those of us working mostly on the frontline as community Pharmacists?

With NICE guidelines, NSF's and a changing NHS structure it is even more important that we all embrace evidence based medicine and practice and without solid, good quality research we cannot provide that evidence or show how pharmacists can help maximise patient care. From the conference, good examples of this are a hypertension study in Alberta, Canada where pharmacists worked in collaboration with other health care providers to significantly reduce patient's blood pressure² and a study analysing the cost benefit of Minor Ailment Schemes in England. Conversely, research can also help us see where practice needs to improve, as in the case of MUR's (Medicines Use Reviews).

One overriding theme in the research projects was how difficult it was to engage community pharmacists to help participate in the studies. NoCLoR is a research organisation which helps high quality research projects with identifying and applying for funding and permissions and also getting studies off the ground. Pharmacy collaborators are paid for their time involved, depending on the study, so why not give it a go and don't just say no! Professor Tsuyuki, keynote speaker at the conference hit the nail on the head when he described the profession's psyche as "passive, lacking confidence and professional identity, fearful of new responsibilities and risk adverse. " We need to move forward and embrace new opportunities, and this is just one way in which we can influence our future. So next time you get a request for help in a research project don't just automatically throw it in the bin but think if it is something that will complement your existing practice, how it could be of influence on future health policies and whether it could be a financially viable project for your pharmacy.

¹ IJPP Vol 19, Supplement 1, June 2011

² http://www.ccpn.ca/docs/Pharmacy_Practice_Research_Ross_Tsuyuki.pdf