

J.W.W. ALLISON - YOUR INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY PHARMACY

House Rules!

Pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and their premises are regulated by an organisation called the General Pharmaceutical Council. This organisation is responsible for setting and maintaining the conduct, ethics, standards and education of pharmacy professionals in their registered pharmacies. We have to pay a fee for this pleasure.

As with other professions, the regulatory body looks closely at the conduct of the registrant, with an emphasis on their professional conduct but with the authority to make judgements on their conduct outside of work too. This is important, as being a part-time stripper or serial killer wouldn't give the required impression of our profession but they did still allow you a little leeway off the premises. Before I get complaints, I am not equating stripping with murder.

There has been a recent decision to implement new standards where they intend to enforce the same standards at all times rather than just during working hours. This has caused anger amongst the ranks and led to the decision being described as 'Orwellian'. One thing it has done, is prevent me from watching Aston Villa games in public as I don't think they'd take kindly to the language, even though most of it is in my head.

Throw the book at them!

When you study pharmacy, the first thing you are told to do is head to the campus book shop and spend a few hundred pounds on a variety of textbooks that will hopefully get you through the first year of the course. You learn early on, that there is one book that will be nearby for the rest of your professional life. If it isn't, then you're either a genius and in the wrong job, or you are too much of a risk taker to be a pharmacist in the first place! This book is called the British National Formulary (BNF) and it's basically an up-to-date reference of pretty much every medication on the market along with their doses, side-effects and interactions. Every pharmacist relies on this book whenever a piece of information they used to hold in their head is harder to access than before, or when new medications arrive on the market.

A few weeks ago, we had a patient request to look at the BNF before they handed in their prescription to us. I was going to assure him that I would look at it if it was necessary but then I decided that maybe I'll leave a copy on the counter if it means patients doing my job for me!

Saying that, I fear that letting patients read that book would only lead to more questions in the long run.

Court short!

A few months ago, you may remember me writing about the ongoing legal case over the government decision to drastically cut funding to community pharmacy. Well at the time of writing it's still ongoing.

The judge has gone away to consider the evidence that was presented during the High Court case back in March.

I followed the case closely via a reporter from the pharmacy press and my feelings went from slightly agitated right through to incandescent rage. There was a lot of talking but the take-home points from the case were:

- The government QC sniped that pharmacies pretty much sold shampoos and sandwiches. It's a good job he doesn't come in our shop!
- The chancellor wrote to Theresa May (she's our Prime Minister!) who was unsure about the cuts to convince her that there were too many pharmacies and that the public would be better served by online pharmacies when they forced traditional pharmacies to close.

The judge mentioned that his next door neighbour has a daughter who is a pharmacist. I'm not sure how this is relevant but I hope the whole profession aren't made to pay if she used to knock her ball into his garden when she was a kid.

Nat Mitchell

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