



A WORD IN YOUR EAR

At the end of the year, we reflect on what has passed, and we plan for the future. What have you done this year that really satisfied you? What have you done that you want to differently next year? (And what makes 1

January any different from 31 December? Or maybe we shouldn't go there!)

One of the things that we at *SAPA* want to do well next year is to meet your needs as a pharmacist's assistant. It's quite difficult, though, if we don't know what your needs are, so I hope that one of the New Year's Resolutions you'll be making will be to keep in touch with us.

Continuing Professional Development

The topic of CPD is sure to be important next year. The Pharmacy Council recently decided to go ahead and make CPD mandatory for pharmacists at some time in the future. The portfolio system will be used to record all CPD activities, and will be checked periodically to make sure that pharmacists comply with the requirements.

It hasn't been mentioned whether or not this will also apply to pharmacist's assistants, but it's a good idea to start preparing now. *SAPA* will continue giving you ideas about what type of information you need in your portfolio, so begin with the questions in this month's *Expand Your Portfolio* section.

A lot of people complain that they don't have time to keep a portfolio up to date. At the Council meeting, it was mentioned that, if it is done correctly, it shouldn't take longer than half an hour a month. That isn't a lot of time, and I'm sure we can all find 30 minutes if we manage our time correctly.

So add this to your list of New Year's Resolutions – to keep your CPD portfolio up to date in 2006!

Over-the-counter medication in children

The article on page 6 raises a lot of interesting questions. One of problems identified is the use of paracetamol and aspirin in children.

In *Expand Your Portfolio*, we've suggested that you should go and read up about Reye's Syndrome and its link to aspirin use in children. It's frightening, particularly when you think about that fact that aspirin is sold freely in supermarkets and general dealer stores, where there is no professional control over it. Similarly, a paracetamol overdose can be fatal, but, again, there are few controls over its sale.

It can be argued, and in fact is argued, that both these drugs are very safe if used correctly in appropriate doses. Consumers are informed by a package insert, so surely they can read it and make their own decisions?

We all know that not all consumers are literate. Even if they are, they need to be guided in the use of these, and other, medicines.

How can you make a difference? Every time you speak to a patient, or a purchaser of medicines, you have a golden opportunity to talk about the correct use of medicine.

Scope of practice

Pharmacists have been talking about their scope of practice, and whether or not the published scope of practice is correct or appropriate. What about the pharmacist's assistants' scope of practice? It's more complicated because there are different levels, but perhaps it's time to revisit the scope of practice. Some time ago we also discussed the need for another category of pharmacist's assistants.

How do you feel about your scope of practice? Please let us have your views on this.

Season's greetings

It's not possible for everyone to take leave at this time of year – someone has to do the work! But I hope that spending time with your family and friends will help you to recharge your batteries, and that you'll greet 2006 with enthusiasm and determination to make a success of your career.

We wish you and yours a joyous festive season, and a happy and healthy new year.

Lorraine Osman