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Special points of interest

This bulletin is free to interested wholesaler employees

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Category M cuts are causing cashflow crises

Pharmacists are facing a “disproportionate burden” in the economic downturn and could go bust because of erratic swings in category M funding, the government was warned this week.

Contractors were nearing crisis point because of inconsistent clawbacks on profits, Liberal Democrat MP Adrian Sanders told colleagues. He launched a parliamentary debate to address the issue after being contacted by distressed local contractors.

Mr Sanders said: “The current economic downturn is adversely affecting many areas of society but community pharmacists are shouldering a disproportionate burden.”

He added: “In recent years the reimbursement regime has led to financial uncertainty and this is

being compounded by restrictions in credit.”

The comments came after Mr Sanders was contacted by pharmacists in his constituency over funding problems.

He was told that category M clawbacks of up to £30,000 per pharmacy would mean a 10 per cent cut on their incomes, threatening their businesses.

He said the pharmacy white paper provided “an outstanding opportunity to consolidate the good work already done by pharmacists and develop their role further to the benefit of the communities they serve”.

But he warned this opportunity could be missed if the current financial problems were not solved: “Not only will many pharmacists be unable to af-

ford diversification, some may be threatened with bankruptcy by the capricious nature of the clawback system.”

Mr Sanders said: “The future of community pharmacy is at an apex and the government must act carefully to ensure this vital community resource is not irreparably damaged.”



Drug orders put UK ahead on pandemic flu planning

The UK is to become one of the “most prepared countries in the world” for a flu pandemic after the Department of Health signed deals to boost treatment reserves. The DH revealed on January 30 that it has agreed contracts with Roche and GSK to double the UK’s antiviral stockpiles by April 2009.

The additional 7.6 million courses of Tamiflu and 10.6 million of Relenza will bring the total antiviral treatment courses available to 33.5 million: enough to treat half of the population.

The pharmacy industry has previously called for pharmacists to have a role in administering vaccines in the event of a pandemic, as many already offer routine flu vaccination services.

Public Health Minister Dawn Primarolo said: “Antivirals are an important part of our robust countermeasure strategy and will ensure we respond effectively in the event of a flu pandemic.”

Lloyds staff deliver the goods in Post

Office trial

Staff at a branch of Lloydspharmacy have been trained to provide Post Office services as part of a nationwide pilot scheme. The multiple's branch in Cambourne, Cambridgeshire will offer "essential" Post Office services, including mail services, cash withdrawals, benefit payments and currency ordering, for the 12-month trial.

Like other contractors, Lloydspharmacy operates several pharmacies that are co-located with post offices. However, the Post Office Essentials pilot differs in that pharmacy staff, rather than separate Post Office staff, carry out the Post Office services.

The Cambourne branch is the only pharmacy taking part in the pilot, which involves around 20 retail outlets - mostly general stores and newsagents. Factors used to assess suitable locations included footfall, daily cash intake and opening hours, a Royal Mail spokesperson said.

A Lloydspharmacy spokesperson said both pharmacy staff and customers had reacted positively to the scheme.

Lloydspharmacy pharmacy relations and governance director, said:

"Lloydspharmacy potentially sees Post Office Essentials as a complementary service which reinforces our role and position within the heart of local communities

Boots unveils plans to expand in-store GP model

Boots has outlined plans to develop its in-store GP model in 2009 in an exclusive interview with the *Cheimst and Druggist* magazine.

The in-store GP pilots had been "exciting projects" in 2008 and developing them would be a key priority for Boots this year, healthcare director Tricia Kennerley said.

"We're looking at how that's going to develop and the future opportunities there are around that."

Of the multiple's six locations with in-store GPs, one now also had a blood donor centre and another had been converted into a "healthy living centre", Ms Kennerley said. The latter premises included six GPs, seven dental chairs, a sexual health clinic and an NHS walk-in centre, she added.

The Birmingham-based "healthy living centre" was currently being redesigned, Ms Kennerley said, "so we can bring the pharmacist and all the healthcare providers together, so we can really create destination healthcare for patients in that store".

Pharmacists had reacted "exceptionally well" to their in-store colleagues, Ms Kennerley said, and the format had resulted in an increased number of referrals between pharmacists, GPs and other healthcare providers.

She added: "For them to be able to work more closely with their colleagues has been a really positive move."



WaveData – Top ten products

According to wavedata, these are the products most looked at in searches of the online pricing data at www.wavedata.net

Both uk and pi prices were viewed for each product, giving some indication of where the focus was in January 09

Venlafaxine XL Caps 150mg 28

Co-Codamol Caps 8mg/500mg 100

Venlafaxine XL Caps 75mg 28

Bicalutamide Tabs 150mg 28

Omeprazole Caps 20mg 28

Bicalutamide Tabs 50mg 28

Alendronate Tabs 70mg 4

Codeine Phosphate Tabs 15mg 28

Clindamycin Caps 150mg 24

Codeine Phosphate Tabs 30mg 28

I will be issuing the next bulletin on the 11th March 09, please let me know by the 4th March 09, if you would like to add or suggest any articles/comments

If you have any colleagues who would like to receive this, please let them know about it.

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