



# A Piece of my Mind

Editorial Comment

## Pharmacy Symposium

Before you read anything else, make sure that you go to the PSSA Perspectives pages and read about the Pharmacy Symposium which the PSSA will be hosting in October.

The topics to be discussed are current and relevant. They influence our practice and our future. Do we really want to go and hear about labour law? If we don't, we should. We are employers or employees, so it affects us all. I like the fact that a union representative is going to be included. I love the idea of asking when we will get it right when decisions are made that influence the pharmacy workforce, and don't get me started on these dreadful medicine adverts that appear on social media. And as for, it's ok to say no! I have a story about that which I'll share with you some other time. The feedback from the Presidential Health Compact is critically important for our future. It's sad that, after so many years, the codeine debate continues. Codeine Care project – what happened to your enthusiasm?

All in all, it's going to be a useful two days.

## Challenging our members!

You may not know about it yet, but YOU are being challenged. If you took my advice and went straight to the PSSA Perspectives page, you'll have noticed that I skipped 2 of the sessions. This is because they may be tailor-made for you.

Abstracts have been called for, and you may be just the right person to present your work to your colleagues. Two of the sessions have been arranged so as to give you the opportunity of active participation in discussions about every aspect of pharmacy. If you have been quietly going about your business and, as part of your daily routine, you have been active in prevention, screening or management of the four priority non-communicable diseases, you may be the ideal person to discuss your experience with us. Or if you have been engaged in research into any sector or any aspect of pharmacy practice, perhaps you need to share your results, and discuss the implication of your experience to pharmacy practice.

## Pharmacy Month

Pharmacists are in the spotlight, and I have no doubt that every pharmacist who encounters patients will be using the opportunity to assure their patients that, whatever their health problem may be, the pharmacist will always be available to assist them.

This year, the theme is one with which I can identify – “Mental health: Are these challenges affecting your mental health?” I'm sure

you agree with it too – we know that stress and anxiety affect both how we think and how we feel about ourselves and our lives.

Having battled with clinical depression for most of my adult life, I certainly understand the damage it can do – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually. I understand the overwhelming feelings of inadequacy, the crippling emotions that accompany the self-doubt, the paralysis that sets in when some imbecile says, “Pull yourself together.”

Fortunately, I've been around the block a few (thousand) times, so nowadays I usually recognise the signs and symptoms before they become an emergency. I've also learned that it doesn't matter how I feel – I must still take my medicines every day. That's non-negotiable.

Unfortunately, there are still many patients who believe that they have been “cured” because they are once again in control of their lives, and they default on their medication. And that's where the community pharmacist comes in. Obviously, the counselling needs of a patient taking medication for the first time are different from that patient's needs when the medicine regimen requires monthly repeats. For repeats, interaction with the patient should be more than just handing over the medicines and passively waiting for the patient to ask questions. Apart from reinforcing information about the medicines and checking that they are being correctly taken, encouragement from the pharmacist goes a long way in healing the patient.

## My choice of a pharmacist?

My pharmacist knows me well. She knows my medical history and my employment history. But she never takes it for granted that I actually know everything (or anything) about my medicines – I always get appropriate counselling. If I didn't, I would go elsewhere – I don't want slipshod service when it comes to my health, or anyone else's, for that matter. She also has two very well trained pharmacist's assistants.

Earlier this year, I had a bout of bronchitis. Being asthmatic, I try not to neglect it, so I went to my doctor and received a prescription. I was particularly busy at that time and I didn't get to the pharmacy for a couple of days. When I did go in, I received a very gentle reprimand from one of the assistants. “You do realise, don't you, that if you'd brought this prescription to us the day you received it, you'd be feeling so much better by now?” Oops. Caught out. Now I need to learn how to be a good patient!

**Lorraine Osman**