

## Michael Cohen Pharmacy

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### OFT PHARMACY REPORT

Dear Mr. Fraser,

The present system of control of pharmaceutical contracts was established in 1987 to try and operate some control on the rational distribution of pharmacies allowing them to open only where it is deemed that they are necessary or desirable. It would appear that the reasons for operating such a system are just as relevant today, perhaps even more so. Pharmacists must feel confident to invest in their business if the Executives strategy 'The Right Medicine' is to become a reality.

The OFT report seems to have a bias towards the interests of supermarkets, presumably because Asda have pushed for the abolition of control on pharmaceutical contracts. Supermarkets can operate a pharmacy in every store at the moment, but if they do this they will need to employ a pharmacist to sell 'pharmacy only medicines'. To make this process more cost effective they also want that Pharmacist to be able to dispense NHS prescriptions. It therefore begs the question; will the Health Service be losing control of pharmaceutical contracts mainly to allow supermarkets to employ pharmacists in a more cost-effective manner? The nonsense of this scenario is compounded by the fact that these same pharmacists are in short supply, and there is a possibility that stores, which at the moment are deemed not to need a pharmacy, could operate one to the detriment of existing essential pharmacies. If pharmacies in local communities close as a result, then it is mainly the elderly who will suffer (these are the people who receive most repeat prescriptions).

The present system of control of pharmaceutical contracts may not be perfect, but it is surely better than no control, where the interests of shareholders of large companies are put before the needs of the health service.

I hope that you will consider these points carefully.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Cohen

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