



Anne MacLeod
Primary Care Division
1ER, St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Thursday, 20 February 2003

Dear Ms MacLeod,

Protecting Patient Access to Pharmacy

***A Patients Association Seminar, Wednesday 5th March at 1.45pm
on the OFT's Recommendations for Pharmacy Contract Deregulation***

I am writing to invite you to an important meeting hosted by the Patients Association and chaired by Andy Burnham, MP on Wednesday 5th March. The meeting will address the OFT's recently published report recommending deregulation of the UK pharmacy sector and will include the launch of the latest chapter in the New Economics Foundation series, "***Ghost Town Britain: A Lethal Prescription***". Following a presentation by our Chief Executive, Mike Stone, guest speakers will include NEF Policy Director, Andrew Simms; Lord Borrie, QC, former Director General of Fair Trading; and Polly Toynbee, Guardian Columnist.

As you may know, in 1987 regulations controlling where NHS-licensed pharmacies can open were introduced. This was to ensure their rational distribution across the UK and therefore maintain access to community-based healthcare provision. The OFT is now recommending that these regulations be removed and the Government has less than 90 days to make its response.

The Patients Association is gravely concerned by the potential impact of any implementation of these recommendations. We believe that they may result in the closure of community pharmacies across the UK, potentially limiting patient access to vital healthcare services. We are particularly worried that many vulnerable patients such as the elderly, those in rural and socially deprived areas and those on lower incomes will find their access to pharmacy severely limited.

We believe that the OFT's recommendations run contrary to the Government's plans for pharmacists to lessen the burden on GPs and play an enhanced role in areas such as diabetes screening, blood pressure testing, comprehensive healthcare advice and other vital services. The continued provision of such services is essential for the delivery of the Government's NHS reforms and allows for patient advice and counselling to be performed in local communities.

The Patients Association, along with many other organisations, is urging the Government not to implement these recommendations. I very much hope that you will give us your support at the meeting on the 5th March, details of which are attached, along with a fax-back form to indicate whether you will be able to attend.

Yours sincerely,



Claire Rayner
President
Patients Association

PATIENTS ASSOCIATION



Protecting Patient Access to Pharmacy

Andy Burnham, MP (Chair)

Member of House of Commons Health Select Committee

SPEAKERS:

Mike Stone

Chief Executive, Patients Association

Lord Borrie, QC

Former Director General of Fair Trading

Andrew Simms

*Policy Director, New Economics Foundation & Author of
Ghost Town Britain*

Polly Toynbee

Guardian Columnist

Wednesday 5 March 2003 at 12.45pm

David Lloyd George Room, 1 Whitehall Place, London

Buffet Lunch Provided

Sponsored by Lloydspharmacy  **for the community pharmacy sector**

For further information on the seminar please call on: 020 7526 3652 or 3618



listening to patients,
speaking up for change

Protecting Patient Access to Pharmacy

Wednesday 5th March 2003, at 12.45pm
David Lloyd George Room, 1 Whitehall Place, London
Buffet Lunch Provided

Name: _____

Organisation: _____

I will be attending the Patients Association Seminar

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend this event

I would like to nominate a colleague to attend

Please fax this form to the Patients Association
on the following number:

024 7643 2615

Alternatively, please e-mail your response to mail@apcouk.com
or post the form to the following address:

**Claire Rayner
President
Patients Association
c/o APCO UK
95 New Cavendish Street
London W1W 6XQ**

If you have any queries about this event, please call:

Claire Ashbridge-Thomlinson on (020) 7526 3652 or Matthew Burchell on (020) 7526 3618.