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24 February 2003

Ronnie Fraser Esq.
Primary Care Division
Scottish Executive
St Andrews House
Regent Road
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Dear Mr Fraser

OFT Report on Pharmacy – Control of Entry Regulations

I am writing to express my concern at the recent proposals by the OFT to relax the Control of Entry Regulations, and to seek your support in resisting the implementation of any such change in Scotland. At the outset I would mention that I have no personal axe to grind here, as I am a locum Pharmacist and free to work for whichever business I choose. Indeed, it could be said that the unregulated opening of more pharmacies would increase the need for pharmacists and enhance my work prospects and remuneration!

However, my concerns are more for the effects on the wider community:-

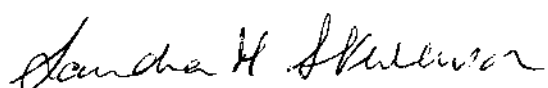
1. The OFT proposals appear to be simply designed to ensure that some 'over the counter' medicines can be made available more cheaply, without taking account of the wider service offered by community pharmacies.
2. The proposals will allow supermarkets and large retailers to develop pharmacies and undercut smaller businesses with their massive buying power, resulting in loss of business and eventual closure in many cases.
3. The loss of such local businesses will impact adversely on the least fortunate members of the community. For example, currently I work regularly for one of two pharmacies in a small West Lothian town – if the nearest supermarket 4 miles away took advantage of any relaxation, many of our customers who shop there will almost certainly also obtain prescriptions and cheaper other medicines, reducing significantly business for the existing pharmacies, possibly leading to closure. Worst of all, those who will not be able to benefit from going to the supermarket will be the elderly, infirm, housebound etc – would this or any supermarket be prepared to make daily deliveries of prescription drugs etc to such people as my pharmacy does?
4. Finally, pharmacists throughout Scotland are about to participate in launching and implementing a range of enhanced pharmacy services as part of the Scottish Executive's health strategy – the uncertainty brought on by the OFT proposals

will affect adversely community pharmacists' commitment to the necessary investment.

There are many other points to made but these are those about which I feel most strongly and I hope that many other pharmacists have written to you also on this topic.

I hope that community pharmacies throughout Scotland can count on your support in resisting the OFT proposals.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sandra M Stevenson".

Sandra M Stevenson