

## UK pharmaceutical industry to strengthen ties with NHS

In an effort to strengthen ties between pharmaceutical companies and the UK National Health Service, and to ward off scepticism about their working together, the UK industry association, the ABPI, and the NHS have published a framework guide for their relationship.

The guide, entitled "Framework for joint working between the Pharmaceutical Industry and the NHS", has been produced by the NHS Alliance, which represents Primary Care Organisations (PCOs) and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), and the ABPI. It follows the same approach as guidance published by the Scottish Executive in December 2003, on partnerships between the Scottish NHS and the pharmaceutical industry.

The guide sets out principles and values involved in working together, and highlights what things to look for in successful partnerships. It also includes a suggested framework checklist to help plan, organise and implement joint partnerships.

### ...values

Values to consider include mutual trust, honesty and respect, openness and transparency and acknowledgement of the interdependent relationship between the NHS and the pharmaceutical industry. Principles include the protection of the interests of individual patients, the duty of clinicians to provide whatever treatment they deem to be appropriate, and that joint working should not be seen as an endorsement or promotion of a specific medicine or technology.

The document says joint activities should benefit both individual patients and wider populations, and it provides examples of successful partnerships between the NHS and pharmaceutical companies. These range from a well-being support programme for mental healthcare to optimising management in palliative care for cancer.

The framework comes as a survey of PCOs throughout the country, carried out by Medical Management Services and the ABPI, showed that more than half of PCOs now work with the industry. Those who do not gave lack of opportunity and time, as well as scepticism as to success, as reasons.

"We hope that the new framework will go a long way to reassuring those PCOs that such partnerships can be very valuable," said Professor Trevor Jones, the ABPI's director general.

The guide is available from the NHS Alliance website at [www.nhsalliance.org](http://www.nhsalliance.org) or the ABPI: [www.abpi.org.uk](http://www.abpi.org.uk).

### New Publications

The Japanese life science information company, Jouhou Koukai Services, has published a new English-language report on e-health issues in Japan. **Japan e-Health Trends** is a wide-ranging survey of the area from the perspective of the pharmaceutical industry, patients and providers. Topics covered include the development and role of online conferences, continuing medical education, medical practice websites and electronic medical records, and the demand for and provision of health information through the Internet. Further details and copies of the report, priced at \$2,450 for a single user licence or \$3,950 for an enterprise-wide licence, are available via [www.jouhoukoukai.com](http://www.jouhoukoukai.com) or [www.ehealth-japan.com](http://www.ehealth-japan.com). E-mail: [jouhoukoukai@jouhoukoukai.com](mailto:jouhoukoukai@jouhoukoukai.com).

## Building of UK research lab delayed by animal activists

Oxford University in the UK is to face delays in the construction of its £18 million biomedical research facility after its building contractor, Walter Lilly and Co (part of Montpellier), withdraw its services because of continued harassment by animal rights activists.

Construction at the site, which will replace and update the university's existing space to a state of the art facility, began earlier this year. The university stressed that it "remains firmly committed" to completing the building and hopes to finish the project next year.

However, it would not say who it might take on to replace Walter Lilly. "We will not make public knowledge the contractor we use as we have seen from our Montpellier experience," it told *Scrip*. Both the Home Office, which legislates on animal experiments, and the Office of Science and Technology said they were committed to providing support to researchers.

There has been some speculation that the Home Office may involve the army to provide logistical support for the building of the site, but neither the university nor the office would comment on this.

### ...tackling extremism

The Home Office is planning to publish a plan in the next three weeks that will propose further legislation to tackle animal extremism. "We have done a lot already, but [we] still need other things to be done," the Home Office said.

Walter Lilly would not comment on the type of harassment its staff had been subjected to. However, sources close to the company told *Scrip* that the "personal wellbeing" of some Montpellier directors had been threatened.

Aisling Burnand, chief executive of the BioIndustry Association, said the news seemed to be "a worrying development for all those who stand to benefit from the work by scientists at the proposed lab, which would develop treatments for serious diseases. We need to stop companies being subject to this sort of intimidation."

The university points out that 96% of the animals that will be experimented on at the lab are rodents. Almost three million animals are used every year in the UK in research generally, rodents making up 84% of them.

## ■ Medicine sales in Germany down by 4.2% in May

Sales of medicines in Germany in May fell by 4.2% to €1.6 billion (at ex-manufacturer price) compared with the same month last year, according to IMS Health data quoted by the German industry association, the BAH. This excludes the effect of the 16% rebate the industry has to give to the statutory insurance funds (Krankenkassen) under the health reform. In terms of packs sold, sales were up by 12.4% to 114 million. Sales of prescription-bound medicines grew by 1.6% but in volume terms there was a 12% decline. Non-prescription medicine sales fell by 14.2% by value and by 12.8% by volume. The various provisions of the healthcare reform, such as the 10-point increase in the rebate this year, the exclusion of non-prescription medicines from reimbursement and the charging of fees to see the doctor (leading to fewer prescriptions), are cited by IMS Health as explanations for the overall sales decline. However, for the 12 months to the end of May, the pharmaceutical market grew by 4.6% to €19.8 billion.