

BAPW: First Parliamentary Reception

18th October 2005

Introduction

Thank you for the invitation to attend this, the first, BAPW Parliamentary reception.

As a self confessed shopaholic I have often seen vehicles in the high street marked with signs indicating that they are delivering important medical supplies. However, prior to taking up to my current appointment I had no idea of their importance. I now know that they belong to wholesalers providing the important service of delivering NHS medicines to pharmacists, doctors and hospitals across the whole country. In many ways you are a hidden support force. Despite a lack of general public acknowledgement you provide an important one stop shop for almost all pharmaceutical products. This service plays a key role in the safe distribution of a diverse range of healthcare products, all to exact orders on a same day basis.

You have also worked hard to ensure the integrity of the supply chain. I am aware that despite all best efforts there are occasions when stolen and counterfeit drugs are illegally offered to unsuspecting buyers. Recent examples include the seizure of a stolen steroid cream in Birmingham. This was being sold to people who wanted to apply it to their children. On another occasion the Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) and local police detected the illegal supply of counterfeit Viagra tablets. Your continuing vigilance over the security of supply in conjunction with the work undertaken by MHRA investigators is so important for patient safety. Together you help to protect the NHS from the acts of unscrupulous individuals putting peoples lives at risk. And patients can be confident that they are getting the medicines they need from legitimate sources - rather than from unethical suppliers with no credentials.

Recent Changes

It is encouraging to know that you have continued to provide these services during a period of significant change within the NHS.

Changes of particular significance for you have included:

- the reductions in the prices of branded NHS medicines caused by the 2005 PPRS; and
- the revisions to the prices of generic NHS medicines introduced by the new Category M of the Drug Tariff.

The financial impact of these new arrangements upon your commercial businesses may not have been exactly welcomed by yourselves.

Nevertheless I am grateful to you for the way in which the BAPW and its members have continued to supply the full range of both branded and generic medicines.

I also want to thank you for your active participation in the design and implementation of the new arrangements for the reimbursement of generic medicines.

Your engagement in these new arrangements has made a significant contribution to future savings. These are necessary to release funds for the development and improvement of patient health within the NHS.

Turbulent Times

All of us in this room are tax payers. We therefore share a common concern. It is important for the Government to ensure that the cost of NHS medicines and arrangements for reimbursement represent Value for Money for the taxpayers and the NHS. There should also be a transparent operation of a competitive market. This will allow fair returns throughout the supply chain.

These new arrangements have involved a great deal of discussion and change during what has inevitably been a turbulent period. However, I hope that the worst of the turbulence is behind us. We now have a new five year

PPRS. And we have an improved and more transparent process for reimbursing generic medicines linked to the new Pharmacy contract.

Final Thanks

I would like to close by repeating my appreciation of the huge contribution you are making. Quietly and without any fuss, you ensure the safe and effective supply of important medicines to so many NHS patients. And you have helped introduce a new system that ensures that the NHS pays a fair price for those medicines.

What more could a Minister ask for?

END

688 Words – approx 5 minutes