



Press Release

BPA RESPONDS TO BBC PROGRAMME “BOOTS: PHARMACISTS UNDER PRESSURE?” **9th January 2018**

The Boots Pharmacists Association (BPA) has a history going back over 40 years representing the interests of pharmacists working for Boots. We take patient safety extremely seriously, and are always distressed to hear of any incident where a patient has suffered harm as a result of a dispensing error. We are unable to make any specific comment about the incidents reported in the BBC programme, as none of our members were involved. It is clear from the programme that the incidents were caused by human error.

We meet regularly with the Boots UK Executive, and use those opportunities to discuss matters of concern to our members, including staffing levels and patient safety issues.

BPA responded to the national consultation and opposed the Department of Health funding cuts introduced in 2016. We were concerned about the potential impact this policy would have on Boots pharmacists, and held discussions with Boots about the implications of the cuts. As a result, we secured a commitment from Boots that pharmacy staffing levels would remain linked to workload, despite the effect of the cuts on pharmacy income. We are aware that other employers in the industry have responded in different ways to the changing financial situation, by reducing staffing or announcing substantial branch closure plans.

Whilst anything that can be used to further improve patient safety in the industry is welcome, it's worth remembering that Boots have always been very aware of patient safety, and very vigilant about error reporting. Boots highlighted the increases in pharmacists and technicians employed over the last couple of years in the programme however the BPA continues to keep patient safety and staffing at the top of the agenda in our consultative meetings with the company.

One of the remuneration changes introduced in the DoH cuts removed the payments to contractors which had been linked to achieving minimum staffing levels. Although these staff levels were very low and had not been reviewed in line with the significant changes in Pharmacy since their introduction in 2005 the BPA believes this was a retrograde step. We would like to see the return of a link between remuneration in the pharmacy contract and appropriate levels of pharmacy resource.

Clearly it is very important that dispensaries are operated correctly and safely, and the Boots' SOP framework provides a platform from which to establish a good practice. Where pharmacists, whether members of BPA or not, have concerns about a dispensary in which they work, there are a number of ways in which they can raise those concerns. Certainly the BPA would be keen to hear from and support its members in resolving any issues to reduce the risk of errors occurring.

Ends