



## Improving Pharmacy Education In The Commonwealth

Asif Khan

**M**EASURES to improve education and training in pharmacy and to promote better pharmaceutical services in Commonwealth countries are outlined in a new report based on a Commonwealth-wide survey.

Among other things, the report calls for more scholarships and grants for students, greater funding for joint research projects between institutions, the provision of books, journals and equipment and regular seminars and conferences to enable professionals to discuss matters of mutual concern.

Other recommendations include exchange of information on teaching and of teachers between Commonwealth countries, the formation of a Commonwealth body of pharmacy educationists and better training facilities and pay for staff.

The report, 'Pharmaceutical education - an analysis of Commonwealth pharmacy schools', has been produced by the Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association (CPA), founded in 1969 to promote the interest of pharmaceutical science and the profession of pharmacy in the Commonwealth.

The report has been published as background information for a series of Commonwealth regional workshops on the education and training of pharmacists and support staff, being held by the CPA in Asia-Pacific, Africa, the Caribbean and Europe.

The report is an analysis of information supplied by member countries on their pharmacy schools in

response to a questionnaire from the London-based CPA.

The questionnaire covered a wide range - from location of pharmacy schools and student numbers to entrance qualifications and types of courses offered.

It invited schools to make suggestions and comment on any problems they might have with which the CPA could assist them, besides providing information on their activities.

The response was "magnificent", according to CPA secretary Raymond Dickinson, who noted that nearly 160 schools in India alone responded to the questionnaire.

He said: "Although the analysis is primarily an information document for the workshops, it is hoped that it will also be a useful source of information to all who are interested in the development of pharmaceutical education internationally".

The analysis was made by Dr. Riaz Khan, an Indian-born British pharmacist, in consultation with Mr. Dickinson. Dr. Khan has carried out assignments as an adviser and consultant to WHO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Dr. Khan, 64, who himself studied at the Aligarh Muslim University in northern India and at the School of Pharmacy of the University of London in Britain, discovered a wide variety of subjects and methods of teaching in Commonwealth pharmacy schools.

Teaching was found to be through lectures, practicals, seminars, tutorials and field work. There was a uniform spread of subjects in both undergraduate and post-graduate courses.

Courses leading to Bachelor of Pharmacy degrees were generally of four years' duration, except in the Pacific and Europe where they lasted three years. The standard reached in pre-university science courses was an important factor underlying this difference.

The majority of schools offering degree courses were affiliated to universities. The diploma course had a larger variety of affiliations, polytechnics, colleges of further education and health departments. In the case in India, the school was run by the local municipality.

The number of full-time post-graduate research students averaged 25 in Canada, the Caribbean and Europe; fewer than 10 elsewhere.

The full-time academic staff in degree courses averaged 18 in most regions, but in Europe and West Africa it was 25. The number of staff members with a doctorate was highest in Europe at 21; the lowest, five, was in central Asia.

Dr. Khan said he found analysing the survey and producing the document an interesting and stimulating experience.

"Education and training is the key to better pharmaceutical services in any country", he said. "The survey seems to present a hopeful and optimistic picture in the Commonwealth, though there is room for improvement".

Dr. Khan has worked in several developing countries, including Zambia where he served as the director of pharmaceutical services. He also held a senior position in Glaxo, one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies which originated in New Zealand but is now based in Britain.

He said the standard of pharmacy education in the advanced Commonwealth nations - Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand - was good. But improvement was needed in the developing Commonwealth where a lack of finance and teaching resources was a constraint.

Institutions and students in developed nations, despite their affluence, receive state support, unlike developing countries where finance is always a problem and where a large number of students have to pay fees themselves.

Dr. Khan said that the mutual recognition of degrees and diplomas and student and staff mobility within the Commonwealth would contribute significantly to improved standards.

The report coincides with the publication, also by the CPA, of a directory of pharmacy schools in the Commonwealth. The directory contains a list of schools by region and includes information on the types of courses offered by them. - Commonwealth Feature.