

Minister Reilly's address, official opening of the new offices of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) on Wednesday 19th June 2013 at 9.30am

I don't often find myself following the late Archbishop of Dublin John Charles McQuaid.

But it was he who officially opened the Shrewsbury Road premises, that were to be the new College of Pharmacy. The opening of the College of Pharmacy marked a major change in pharmacy education.

And, just over 60 years later, here I am to mark the PSI's move into these beautiful premises on Fenian Street. Which coincides with another significant change in pharmacy education.

Great that the PSI has designated this as a tobacco-free campus, one of the first agencies under the remit of the Department to be so. By the end of 2013, all 49 acute hospitals, 35% of primary care centres and all administration sites will be tobacco free.

Pharmacists – whether they work in the community, hospitals, pharmaceutical industry or as interns - play a very important role in the delivery of healthcare in Ireland.

You expected me to say that, didn't you?

True, though. And growing more true by the day.

Community pharmacists, who are at the coalface of primary care, have broadened their range of services. They now provide:

Emergency hormonal contraception

Advice on healthy eating

Support with smoking cessation and most importantly,

Advice to help patients manage their medications.

And, of course, almost 20,000 patients received vaccinations in 2012/2013 from a total of 817 pharmacies.

If the role of the pharmacist is expanding, that's matched by the need for education and training of pharmacists. The PSI Council rightly puts reform of pharmacy education and training top of its priority list.

The new five-year integrated Masters level pharmacy degree across the three schools of pharmacy in Ireland is in line with best international practice. It will ensure newly qualified pharmacists are more clinically-focussed, ready to play a critical role in the delivery of integrated healthcare services.

The degree will also allow greater integration with the pharmaceutical industry and this reflects the Government's policy approach to the forging of strong partnerships with industry and collaborative links across academic institutions.

Developments in pharmacy practice will be enabled, supported and facilitated by having an Institute and a quality assured CPD system in place.

The Institute will join with the other professional bodies as a key partner in the HSE Clinical Care Programmes and a number of pharmacists have already been appointed to those Programmes.

We're in the process of massive organisational change, and when that happens, we have to remind ourselves every day, every hour, that everything we do is about the patient. We must listen to those at the front line who are in constant contact with patients. Community pharmacist can massively impact on our thinking – just as they can make a huge contribution to the key goal of treating the patient at the appropriate lowest level of complexity. It will be very important that pharmacists come forward with evidence-based, cost-effective initiatives to help achieve that.

Change – like the shift to generics – is always a challenge. But it can also be an opportunity. Generic substitution provides pharmacists with the opportunity to engage with patients on the cost-effective use of medicines.

The PSI deserves a huge slap on the back for bringing the International Pharmaceutical Federation World Conference to Ireland August 31st to September 5th 2013 in the Convention Centre in Dublin.

This is a great honour for Ireland and an important opportunity to showcase Ireland and the pharmaceutical and pharmacy sectors in Ireland with upwards of 3,000 delegates attending.

You know that if my Department can help with the preparations, we will.

I should also mention that my Department is hosting a Senior Pharmaceutical Policy-Makers Symposium on 29/30th August to coincide with the FIP Congress. The theme of the Symposium is **“Achieving Responsible Use of Medicines – Real Patients, Real Policy, What Really Works?”** and will build on proceedings from the Health Ministers’ Summit- ‘The benefits of responsible use of medicines’ – held in Amsterdam in October 2012.

The PSI has been very helpful in the preparations for the Symposium, and we’re grateful.

The PSI has played an important role in the development of the practice of professional pharmacy in Ireland and this occasion marks the beginning of a new and exciting period for the Institute.

It’s just great to be here on such a happy and significant day and I hope you all love your new offices.
