

## **BPS response to Prime Minister's statement on UK Life Sciences Strategy**

Professor Philip Routledge, President of the British Pharmacological Society (BPS), responded:

*"BPS welcomes the Prime Minister's review of the UK Life Science Strategy on the first anniversary of its original launch. At the time, we applauded the announcement of measures to support drug discovery and development in the UK, and to restore the UK's competitive advantage in this vital field.*

*"Twelve months later, we continue to support the Strategy's ambitions. With pharmacologists at the vanguard of drug discovery and development, the Society has identified additional challenges and trends facing UK Life Sciences, and it would encourage the Prime Minister to address these issues alongside those considered in the existing Strategy."*

### **Continued support for the Strategy**

- BPS is strongly supportive of measures to support research and development in the UK and welcomes proposals that recognize innovation, such as the patent box.
- BPS also supports the unlocking the power of the NHS – and in particular NHS data – as an unparalleled resource for drug discovery. Access to patients' anonymised records through the Clinical Practice Research Datalink (CPRD) promotes more precise monitoring of medicines after regulatory approval, as well as faster delivery of new medicines and new approaches for using existing medicines.
- BPS is continually reviewing how best to make available data from our two peer-reviewed journals, the British Journal of Pharmacology and British Journal of Clinical Pharmacology. As a result, we recently began to open up our journals to text mining, with the approval of a request from the Human Genome Project.

### **Latest challenges facing the sector**

#### **1. Retaining core skills**

- If we are to retain a world-leading life sciences sector in the UK, amid changing ways of working, we must retain core skills and add capabilities. In 2012, BPS jointly organised a meeting attended by more than 20 learned societies on the skills needed for future drug discovery. The key actions arising from this included collaborative work around training modules, accreditation of degrees, development of professional registers such as those for technicians (and the accompanying requirement for continuing professional development), mentoring programmes, bursaries linked to work placements for students, strong advocacy of drug development overall (to encourage new talent) and the use of case

studies to spotlight industrial researchers who have successfully transferred to academia.

- BPS' commitment to excellence in clinical research and teaching will undoubtedly facilitate the implementation of government strategy, but further consideration of the need for recruitment and training of clinical pharmacologists would be very welcome. If clinical pharmacology is to help the UK realise opportunities around clinical trials and translational research, it will need to be more highly valued as a specialty and receive support to ensure excellent candidates are recruited, retained and developed within the speciality.

## **2. Academia and industry collaboration**

- BPS recognizes that academic and industrial links will be critical to the delivery of the Life Sciences Strategy. The sector has already put forward plans for delivering shared research placements and has welcomed the launch of the model Industry Collaborative Research Agreement, which shortens the negotiation and contracting process for joint research involving industry, universities and the NHS.
- BPS is in the process of working with other Learned Societies to promote pre-competitive collaborations between industry, academia and clinical bodies. The aim is to identify, support and create initiatives which will incentivize the exchange, helping to overcome the major barriers that have been identified in: funding, culture, transferable skills, mutual recognition of success and career progression.
- BPS was proud to be one of the partner organizations that launched new Guidance on collaboration between healthcare professionals and the pharmaceutical industry in March 2012, and the Society continues to be actively involved in the Ethical Standards in Health and Life Sciences Group ([www.eshlsg.org](http://www.eshlsg.org)) in order to nurture effective and appropriate collaboration between industry and academia.

**ENDS**

### **Notes to editors**

#### **About BPS**

BPS is the primary UK learned society concerned with research into drugs and the way they work. Our members work in academia, industry, and the health services, and many are medically qualified. The Society covers the whole spectrum of pharmacology, including laboratory, clinical, toxicological and regulatory aspects.

Clinical pharmacology is the medical specialty dedicated to promoting safe and effective use of medicines for patient benefit. Clinical pharmacologists work as consultants in the NHS and many hold prominent positions in UK Universities.

#### **About the Life Sciences Strategy**

'[Strategy for UK Life Sciences](#)' was announced on 5 December 2011 by Prime Minister David Cameron as a multi-million-pound package of support to support the UK's life sciences industry.