

Dounby Surgery

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The Editor
The Orcadian
Hells Half Acre
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Sir

We note with interest that in trying to allay the concerns of our patients the Norsepharm directors have compared the situation in Broadford, Skye with ours in Dounby.

Broadford may or may not be geographically similar, but the practice there consists of doctors, nurses and other staff who are all salaried employees of Highland Health Board and where the income from dispensing went to the Health Board rather than to the practice. It is hardly surprising therefore that the practice has remained successful; though, having spoken to a practice representative, I understand that the patients there are less than happy about the new pharmacy arrangements and are upset that their views were neither sought nor heeded.

We are surprised that the Norsepharm directors were not aware of this, but as we are sure they would not seek to deliberately mislead, clearly this must have been an honest mistake, albeit a damaging one. However, our patients are not so easily fooled, (indeed our patient group "SOS Dounby" alerted us about this information). They know that we are an independent GMS practice and that the funding that the practice receives for dispensing is vital to our survival. As a matter of fact, as described on our website www.dounbysurgery.co.uk, it has paid for training for one of our Practice Nurses, enabling her to become an independent prescriber and deal with the very minor ailments that Mr Clyde says his pharmacy will treat. Of course a pharmacy would get extra funding for providing a minor ailments service, whereas the service we offer is entirely funded from existing resources. While we appreciate Norsepharm's concern about our being swamped, it is misplaced as we have already taken the necessary steps to avoid this.

The statement also neglected to point out that the computer system at the surgery contains a complete medical record for every patient and routinely checks for medication interactions and individual patient allergies etc before any prescription is issued. It is difficult to see how a relatively incomplete database, held in a pharmacy would enhance this, especially as people are not obliged to go to any particular pharmacy with their prescription.

Far from enhancing the service we provide, having a pharmacy in Dounby will be enormously detrimental to our surgery and its patients. We trust that a retraction of this misinformation will be forthcoming and will be as prominently displayed as the original statement.

Yours etc

Drs R Hazlehurst and E Logan