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letter to the editor

Reason better than knee jerk response

Thanks to Terry Maguire for his colourful response (*Irish Pharmacist* February 2014) to our national pharmacy survey on contraceptive / abortifacient dispensing patterns mailed in December. Its so easy to throw about emotive labels like fundamentalism, militancy, extreme and totalitarian in knee jerk response when someone with a different view raises a matter for open discussion.

The reality is that our organisation Human Life International (Ireland), whose mission is indeed to promote life, faith and family according to the teaching of the Catholic Church is constantly asked do we know of any pharmacies that do not dispense abortifacients. People would travel long distances to patron such pharmacies. We were asked so many times that eventually we decided to create the survey which every pharmacy received. Responses have been heartening.

I myself practiced as a pharmacist for seven years before coming to an increasing realisation of implications of the loss of human life by my hand through the dispensing of abortifacients. I held that if a woman conceived and presented in my pharmacy, I had two patients to consider not one. I found that if I truly believed human life was sacred and made in the image and likeness of God, there were un-

comfortable realities I simply had to face, realities that transcended mere professional ethics. I was forced to consider the idea we are morally accountable for how we treat our fellow human beings along the road of life. If every one of us has a right to life from the moment of conception, aren't we surely thus obliged to care for others in the same situation? Isn't this not the truly professional response? Pharmacists are thrust into the frontline of a moral quagmire that university clinical training does not equip us to deal with.

Further clinical and ethical considerations are at www.positivepharmacy.org, which incidentally is attracting international attention. This is a big issue for pharmacists way beyond our Irish shores.

Would Terry call Muslim pharmacists exercising religious conviction in declining to dispense abortifacients extreme or totalitarian? Why the cheap smear of those with a different viewpoint with the despicable behaviour of a number of clerics. Would he do the same with Muslim colleagues?

Perhaps the Pharmaceutical Society would host an open debate for some more reasoned discussion?

**Patrick McCrystal (BSc Pharmacy)
Executive Director, Human Life
International (Ireland)**

editorial

A new look for a new era

BELIEVE it or not, it is now nearly 16 years since the very first issue of *Irish Pharmacist* hit the presses. Since that time a lot has changed in the world of Irish pharmacy.

The publication of the Pharmacy Act 2007 and subsequent establishment of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland both had a major impact on how pharmacy was practised. Education has changed, costs have been cut, services have improved and what it means to be a pharmacist today is constantly evolving.

During this period *Irish Pharmacist* has endeavoured to reflect these changes by bringing pharmacists the latest news and analyses from the sector and trying to address the concerns of pharmacists.

Since taking the editor's seat here at *Irish Pharmacist* a little over three years ago, I have been extremely lucky to have witnessed some exciting changes at the publication including the creation and subsequent development of our monthly CPD pullout in conjunction with the esteemed *Irish Pharmacist* CPD editorial board which included Dr Martin Henman, TCD; Prof Julia Kennedy, UCC; Dr Aisling O'Leary, RCSI; Margaret McCahill, senior phar-

macist, Bon Secours Hospital, Dublin and Nicola Cantwell, Community and Veterinary pharmacist.

Last April, in response to requests from our readers, we brought pharmacists a new educational offering with the launch of PharmacistCPD.ie, a free website where pharmacists could update their clinical knowledge with modules written by pharmacists for pharmacists.

This year we hope to improve our offering even further and from this month we are delighted to bring you the newly redesigned *Irish Pharmacist*. The newspaper will still feature all the latest news, comment and analysis that our readers have come to know and trust, but has a new easier-to-follow layout and design. Over the months ahead we hope to improve the publication even further and we would welcome comments from you, our readers, about what we can do to make *Irish Pharmacist* better for you.

We look forward to hearing from you,

**Mary Corcoran
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