



BRITISH
PHARMACOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Today's science, tomorrow's medicines

Revive leadership in pharma R&D

BPS and other representatives from professional bodies prepared and signed a letter addressing concerns about the future of UK pharmaceuticals research and development. The letter was published in the [Financial Times](#), and replicated below.

"Sir, The contraction of pharmaceutical research and development in the UK is a cause for real concern: for the economy, for the health of the public, for researchers and for health professionals. To closures by Merck Sharp & Dohme, GlaxoSmithKline, Roche and Pfizer has now been added AstraZeneca's re-organisation and reduction.

Professional bodies with key members and interests in these areas recognise the strength and leadership potential in drug discovery in the UK, and are committed to safe-guarding this. Clearly, excellent research is continuing in the UK and it is not all bad news in the sector.

AstraZeneca's intention to maintain corporate headquarters in the UK and to concentrate specific areas of R&D at a new site in Cambridge demonstrates a welcome continuation of corporate confidence.

However, in order to maintain the UK as the attractive location for inward investment it will be necessary for concerted action to keep us at the cutting edge of skills, expertise and innovation.

Although timescales and costs differ between engineering and pharmaceutical sector R&D, some useful parallels and lessons can be drawn with the story of the UK automotive sector where, faced with decline, industry and government began to work together, creating the Automotive Council to ensure that critical capabilities were not lost.

However, the revival of fortunes did not start until the existing industry was in serious jeopardy and our hope is that we can revive pharmaceutical R&D at an earlier stage in this instance. We are ready to work with government, medical charities, the industry, academic institutions and the NHS to ensure that the UK reaps the full benefit of the £1bn annual investment in biomedical research and remains a powerhouse for the discovery of the medicines of the future."

Jonathan Bruun, Chief Executive, British Pharmacological Society; Dr Robert Parker, Chief Executive, Royal Society of Chemistry; Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive, Society of Biology; Kate Baillie, Chief Executive, Biochemical Society; Dr Heather Wallace, Vice-President, British Toxicology Society; Dr Kevin Brady, Honorary Treasurer, Drug Metabolism Discussion Group; Dr Philip Wright, Chief Executive, Physiological Society; Helen Gordon, Chief Executive Officer, Royal Pharmaceutical Society; Dr Janet Halliday, Chair, Industrial Pharmacy Forum, Royal Pharmaceutical Society; and Joanne Lyall, Executive Director, Society of Chemical Industry