

## Society of Biology

### Drug discoverers in a complex world

Released on 01 June 2012



The change currently facing the British pharmaceutical industry may be essential if the UK is to maintain its place as a world-leader in drug discovery. However, it comes with challenges we need to address. This week an article in Research Fortnight by Dr Mark Downs, Chief Executive of the Society of Biology, discussed solutions to these problems, and the role of Learned Societies.

Drug discovery will increasingly take place across multiple sites, and a diverse group of people will be involved. For these collaborations to be effective, it won't be sufficient to be an outstanding research scientist. To succeed in drug development, researchers will need strong communication and project management skills, and the ability to network.

As drug development becomes more multidisciplinary there will be a need to move away from traditional subject divides.

Mark says: "The boundaries between clinical practice and research into new medicines need to fall away. Industry, academia, the health service, charities and the government must collectively be seen as integral to the process, with an expectation that staff can move freely between them."

The move from academia to industry is relatively easy, but a move the other way round is hindered because those working in industry generally don't build up a publication record. There is the need to develop a different way of marking the research capabilities of scientists, and by supporting professional development Learned Societies can assist with this.

Recently, more than 20 Learned Societies met to discuss the skills needed for future drug discovery. The outcomes which will follow include collaborative work around training modules, [degree accreditation](#), development of [professional registers](#) such as those for technicians, mentoring programmes, bursaries linked to [work placements for students](#), and case studies to highlight researchers who have transferred to academia.

The article was written on behalf of the Society of Biology, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the British Pharmacological Society, and was the third in a series of three:

[Keep making the tablets](#)

[Big Pharma is broken, how can we fix it?](#)