

SCIENCE IN PARLIAMENT

The Journal of the Parliamentary and Scientific Committee.

The Committee is an Associate Parliamentary Group of members of both Houses of Parliament and British members of the European Parliament, representatives of scientific and technical institutions, industrial organisations and universities.

Science in Parliament has two main objectives:
a) to inform the scientific and industrial communities of activities within Parliament of a scientific nature and of the progress of relevant legislation;
b) to keep Members of Parliament abreast of scientific affairs.



Cash injections into British Energy and MG Rover resulted in the DTI balancing its end-of-year books by raiding the science budget to the tune of £69 million, despite the fact that the science community were told the science budget would be ring fenced when the DTI became responsible for it. That's the bad news. The good news is that the Chancellor announced further growth in the science budget in his Budget speech in March.



According to the World Health Organisation, 10% of medicines available on the internet and up to 50% of those sold in developing countries are counterfeit. Obviously, this can cost people their lives.

There is little evidence that the sale of counterfeit medicines is a significant problem in the UK, although Pfizer has had problems with one of its products. As a result, they have chosen Unichem as the sole distributor of their medicines. GSK already operates a streamlined distribution system of its products, whilst other companies are considering direct-to-pharmacy distribution systems.

Is it the security of their products that is driving this change or the increased profit that can arise from it? Perhaps either the Public Accounts or Health Select Committee can carry out an inquiry in order to answer this question? Certainly, the Government has cut the profits of pharmaceutical companies recently by renegotiating the PPRS.

Remember cold fusion – Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischmann's sensational claims in 1989 that nuclei could be forced to fuse together at room temperature, thereby releasing energy? Well, the subject is very much alive according to an American Chemical Society's symposium, held in Chicago in March, and the fact that responsible Journals are accepting papers on this subject again. But, the sceptics still abound. On April 26, I was privileged to present prizes to the winning team of the 2007 British Physics Olympiad and the runners up at the Royal Society. We wish the winning team good luck at the International finals, to be held in Istafhan, Iran in July.

Dr Brian Iddon MP
Chairman, Editorial Board
Science in Parliament

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