



22nd Seminar of the Chamber

Presentation by Isabelle ADENOT, Chairman of the National Council of the Chamber of Pharmacists

Minister,
Members of Parliament,
Chairmen,
Directors,
Friends of the francophone Chambers,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great emotion that I have the honour of welcoming you today, as Chairman of the National Council of the Chamber of Pharmacists.

It is also emotional recalling the Galenic oath that I gave, as did all pharmacists present, this oath that unites us all and gives us the responsibilities of which we are proud.

An emotion, that we all feel, Minister and colleague, because of your most loyal presence at the annual Seminar of our Chamber, as no-one can know and understand our values and the issues concerned with our future better than you.

You have been involved in the implementation of an essential law, and you have not found our professions wanting in meeting the challenges of your innovations.

You are facing up to a threat of a pandemic that is difficult to define, and here too you have shown confidence in our pharmacists and in the responsiveness of the drug chain, an incomparable, secured network, that is both reliable and responsive.

You have similarly encouraged our momentum of modernity in the deployment of the Pharmaceutical Record [Dossier Pharmaceutique/DP]. This is now present, in under two years, in more than half of the pharmacies. One French person in twelve has already opened up their DP, and one in seven aged over 60. The DP is thus the first national healthcare record.

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Naturally, the Chamber is setting out at this point from a sound footing ... more of a springboard one might say; as you can imagine, I would like once more to pay a warm tribute to the outstanding work of Jean Parrot over these past 16 years.

It is also fitting that I should take stock of my responsibilities. They will require my full commitment in order to live up to expectations of the undertakings I have made before my colleagues: steadfastly to ensure that the profession continues to evolve in the service of patients, and to do so in a manner that preserves respect for our ethical principles. These two objectives will guide my office of chairmanship and I intend to translate them into tangible outcomes.

The **competency** of professionals, the **safety** of actions taken, and the **independence** of practice are, and will remain the guiding principles of our approach.

This approach will consistently be pursued in a context of respect for our ethical principles. We are in fact fortunate to be practising in a profession that serves a noble cause: the protection and promotion of public health. This is its *raison d'être*. These values, in the service of human dignity, give meaning to our actions. They also earn the trust of the general public.

And it is precisely in anticipation of the needs of this public, that you, Minister, have acted, with the "law implementing hospital reform and relating to patients, healthcare and the territories". By initiating this enormous range of tasks you are sending out a message of high expectations of what our professions can deliver, for the towns as well in healthcare establishments.

This law provides for numerous advancements.

As elected representatives of the Chamber, whose job it is to monitor the competency of pharmacists, we are very proud of the adoption of the concept of continuing professional development.

The profession understands that this involves an investment in its future. Continuing professional development will be the guarantor of safety and quality of service for patients. We hope that the legislation application texts will soon be available to provide us with the means for a substantive implementation for all our colleagues.

Regarding laboratory biology, with the ordinance you have prepared, this will soon be recognised as an entirely separate medical discipline. Pharmacist laboratory biologists will no longer be regarded only as service providers, but as healthcare professionals, soon to be accredited as such, fulfilling a medical role in three stages: taking samples, the analytical phase and finally in interpretation and post-analytical advice.

As for dispensing pharmacists, Article 38 of the HPST [hospital, patients, health and territories] law, is a “founding text” comprising legislation from which they will construct the future. In fact it clearly defines and extends the scope of their missions.

You are inviting the profession, Minister, to grasp the opportunities presented by your law.

Rest assured that the Chamber is, and will be, a force for the proposal of many legislation application texts that your departments prepare, although we regret that the consultation currently underway may often be too precipitous, in the light of the importance of the issues involved. It is in our interests that these legislative texts should be relevant for the practices of our professionals. We are at your disposal to contribute to this work.

But let us be clear: each of our professions needs the power to be able to assume the role that it is assigned in a viable way. Laboratory biologists will soon be able to practise at many different sites in a given territory, hospital pharmacists will devote themselves to the hospital communities of the territory. Henceforth, it is normal for dispensing pharmacists to organise themselves not only in physical groups, but also in economic groups, within their professional practice partnerships.

In addition to this, we consider it legitimate and urgent for the opportunity to be opened up for creating holding companies (companies with financial share holdings) between dispensing pharmacists or between laboratory biologists. This development has been provided for by the MURCEF [measures of urgent reform of an economic and financial nature] law of 2001, eight years ago ... It is high time for this to be implemented.

In this respect, a government initiative has come just at the right moment: we are in fact expecting a lot of this mission concerning the liberal professions that your colleague Hervé NOVELLI has entrusted to Maître Brigitte Longuet.

In the meantime, in May, the European Court of Justice confirmed the principle of jurisdiction for Member States of the Union to reserve ownership of capital in community pharmacies for pharmacists. This constitutes a major recognition of the specific nature of the world of healthcare. It should ensure the independence of practising professionals.

But how can we discuss public health projects and the reform of practising structures without addressing the legitimate concerns that require our attention and your active support.

Why is this?

Because the economic context is making itself felt; because the economic crisis in which we currently find ourselves does not spare the world of pharmacy; because those involved in the pharmacy sector have positions to be defended and because international competition is growing.

It is certainly true that the economy itself does not fall within the scope of the Chamber. But we cannot ignore the context in which our colleagues operate. We will therefore always be concerned that the proposed developments, and initiatives instigated are achievable in practice and ethically acceptable.

Rising to the challenges, adopting a modernising approach in order to meet the needs of patients, pharmacy is ready for this and has proved it. As our industry was able to do so in its capacity to innovate in the field of biotechnologies. As with the dispensing pharmacists who have accepted the challenges of communications technologies with the Pharmaceutical Record who will shortly be joined by the pilot scheme with the hospital pharmacists.

But all of this would not have been possible without safeguards and controls. Because without points of reference, how can we advance in the confidence that we are going in the right direction? It is the joint role of public bodies and of the Chamber to ensure that the values and interests of public health are neither infringed or circumvented.

In a context of globalisation, of the multiplication of entities becoming involved where financial imperatives are increasingly important, the safety of the drug chain is more than ever a duty that takes priority.

One subject, I am certain, is the object of unanimity, so great is the danger that it presents. This the development of counterfeiting.

France has hitherto managed to avoid this scourge: we know that this is largely due to “sentinel” pharmacists present at each link in the drugs chain, and the audits of our structures by the authorities.

However, a failure in this security of the chain may yet occur. On the Internet, all kinds of operators are investing in the drugs market. It offers a fast track to the propagation of counterfeiting. We cannot just look away from this reality that is growing all the time.

It therefore seems to us a matter of urgency, Minister, to bring forward work in this area and in particular to reserve exclusively for established pharmacies, which therefore present the appropriate guaranties, the option of setting up a web site. French Internet users, as well as their European neighbours, are entitled to this assurance of safety.

Naturally there are other issues that transcend our national frontiers and require decisions at European level. For the avoidance of doubt: we know that an aspect of our future lies with Europe, whose authorities deal with key issues and we intend to approach this with an open mind.

Although discussions may be lively and at times heated, we also know that our arguments can be heard and we very pleased that this is the case. I have cited the decision of the Court of Justice of 19 May 2009 on community pharmacy capital, which has been a game changer.

We hope for a similar outcome for laboratory biology.

As evidence that our Chamber is working with a truly European spirit, last week, we submitted an important call for proposals to the European Commission. This involves the development of the technologies necessary for the authentication of healthcare professionals, because the borders between the Member States are becoming less marked and professionals have freedom of mobility.

If this major dossier is adopted by the European Commission, our Chamber, which is recognised in Europe for the work it has done, carried out with diplomacy by Patrick Fortuit., will be the co-ordinator for all European healthcare professionals.

However, we will not seek to bolt onto the French reality models of professional practice that are not our own. We can be pragmatically inspired by the successful experience of others in Europe and elsewhere of course. But calling into question the elements that form the very basis of the quality of our practice, certainly not.

We defend our model in the name of the best interests of patients, that it is the duty of the pharmacist to protect, to ensure that the quality of their pharmaceutical services is maintained, and not in the interests of pharmacists alone.

By thus defending the values of public health, we hope that if we are under attack from those who seek to use the European dimension to undermine the French model, we will be able to count on your support and on that of the government.

To all those would pursue the dangerous path of making drugs easily available, we say NO. To all those who wish to characterise the health sector as a market just like any other market, merely subject to market forces, we also say NO.

On the other hand, to those who favour competitiveness in the area of quality, we say YES.

Because this means working for a better service, operated by a competent, independent and responsible professional, bound by a code of ethics. In other words this entails having respect for a patient, who is an individual first and foremost, and a consumer last.

This being said, I invite your to share my conviction and my vision for the future of the profession. Because there is quite a future for pharmacists, even a bright future, so long as we can, with them, take the right decisions at the right times and develop in accordance with the needs of society.

In other words, let us move forward in the direction of the promotion of good practice and the enhancement of the safety the drugs circuit. Let us aim for an ever more personalised approach treatment and the monitoring of treatment.

Two years ago, Minister, in this same setting, you declared:

"It is less the drugs that constitute the common denominator of your activities but the quality of your work, founded on shared competencies and on a rational ethos equally espoused by all".

I am sure that all the pharmacists in the biology analysis laboratories, in the hospitals and in the community pharmacies, assisted by their industrial colleagues and logisticians, are ready to meet the challenges of excellence in public healthcare and in proximity - a crucial social link.

This proximity is not the preserve of healthcare professionals alone, It also matters for the other drugs-related professions. Could one ever imagine France being reduced to a sales counter, without a single manufacturing company on its soil?

We cannot do without these advanced industries that contribute to national growth with their share of qualified employment.

The Chamber is committed to all its plans for the future.

Because in order not to penalise future generations of pharmacists by separating them off from other healthcare professionals, our Chamber, together with the other healthcare Orders, within regional liaison committees, will be contributing actively to co-operation and co-ordination between professionals.

Because you have sought to simplify administration, the Chamber will, once your ministerial order is in place, become the single gateway for the formalities of access to the profession. This will avoid the need for our colleagues for an exhausting assault course. Pharmacists will be the first profession to benefit from this advancement.

Because best practice and robust systems of reference constitute the key prerequisites for evaluating professional practices, we are actively contributing to drafting these. In the meantime we publish recommendations, as is the case now with those relating to the cold chain in community pharmacies. As, in future, for those relating to transport between establishments or concerning the management of patients in first line treatment consultation in the dispensing community pharmacy.

And finally, because dispensing cannot do without a computerised tool that is compliant with the regulations, we have just signed a partnership agreement with the French National Authority for Health [HAS] for the undertaking of a certification initiative for software packages intended for use in community pharmacies.

In order to achieve all this, our Chamber, I stress, is also a collective. Nearly 400 Chamber Council members and very many staff are today gathered before you. All of them are mobilised for the success of the projects that the legislator has entrusted to us.

I particular wish therefore, in your presence, to thank these individuals for this commitment. They contribute to making the image of our institution what it is. They also contribute to its rich resources: a Chamber combining all the pharmacy professions, united over and above their diversity, in a common denominator: the fundamental values of our profession. The code of ethics has been and shall remain our strength in earning the confidence of the public. In the midst of an economic crisis, this must hold true. It is CERTAIN that ethics will more than ever constitute a solid value and guarantor of our future.

These are the subjects, Minister, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, that I wished to draw to your attention. I will not pursue these further at this point as it is now time for us to listen to you, Minister, as you set out for us your perception and intentions on matters that condition the practice and the future for pharmacists.

It is in the name of the best interests of patients that you can reciprocally count on the Chamber just as it counts on your support.

We will have plenty to do together during 2010, and I very much look forward to this collaboration which I am sure will be a very fruitful one.