

AWARD WINNERS PROFILE

Quick off the blocks

Aniket Parikh joined Clockwork Pharmacy straight after his pre-reg year. Brimming with ideas and enthusiasm, he undertook extra responsibilities and remained active right from the start. Faras Ghani examines his route to success, the Pharmacy Business Newcomer Award 2008, despite his recent arrival into the profession...



Fact file

Name: Aniket Parikh

Years in industry: Almost two

Pharmacy: Clockwork Pharmacy, Hackney, London

Staff: Seven

Prescriptions: 3,500 per month

Services offered: Smoking cessation, substance misuse, minor ailment, emergency contraception, weight management, diabetes screening, asthma management

As with most students embarking upon university life in their late teens, Aniket Parikh too was not quite sure of the future. While science-related careers seemed almost certain, particulars and the exact path that he would follow stayed unclear.

Due to the uncertainty, I did some research into different professions I could go into and realised pharmacy was one of a change,' Parikh said. 'I wanted to be part of something which was in transition and where I could make an impact and that is what decided it for me. I had a feeling that I can make a difference and take it to another level and that is probably the main factor that brought me into pharmacy.'

True to his word, Parikh managed to take it to another level and only a year and a half into the profession, he became the winner of the Pharmacy Business Newcomer Award 2008. Despite being new in the field, Parikh became one of the most active pharmacists in the area while also improving the design of his pharmacy

to make it more customer friendly.

'It was weird how the journey to receiving the award began,' Parikh said. 'My dispenser had applied for an award and was being interviewed with regards to that. I got talking to the interviewer and told him about my daily routine and day-to-day tasks that I carry out and all of a sudden he told me to apply for an award myself as he seemed quite impressed.'

'I had thought about applying but just hadn't gotten round to filling out the forms. However, this push was what I needed and I went ahead and filled out the forms. That is all history now and here I am with the award.'

Although Parikh did not expect to win the award – have we not heard that before? – he, and his staff and customers, felt really proud of the effort, especially considering his rawness in the profession. 'I'm really modest so I didn't really shout across the floor that I had won an award. But I'm quite proud of my achievement actually. In the short space that I've been prac-

ting, to win an award is quite pleasing. It did take a while to sink in but I feel very, very proud.'

Despite the award, it has not been all that easy for Parikh since stepping into the real world.

'The real world of pharmacy is completely different from what we learn about at university. While at college or university you can't really tell what it will be like after you graduate.'

Terming people skills as the biggest requirement in order to effectively deal with customers, Parikh was wary of the fact that it was not taught during the course. 'That people skills just comes with experience to be honest and you learn that with time.'

'In that sense, university doesn't really prepare you for the real world and customers. Also, the scientific knowledge that you gained over the years, you don't really need much of that during your daily tasks here at the pharmacy. You tend to keep that at the back of your head and hope it comes in handy when required.'

Aniket's guide to success

● **Let go of old habits** – A lot of people, especially older pharmacists, haven't taken on the new contract that easily and are still stuck doing things the way they have always done. Just remember, this is now a 'new' contract, it's the only contract. Rather than thinking about how things were in the past, just adapt it and take it forward.

● **Widen your horizons** – Do not get stuck doing just the bare minimum. Take on extra responsibility, do things that you like. Push yourself a bit further and don't be scared of doing that. In the end, make sure you benefit from it.

● **Make yourself heard** – It's a good profession to be involved with. As it is in the process of changing, make sure you make your points known and your voice heard. There is a lot more that you can offer to the community and to ensure it is moving in the right direction, don't be afraid to comment on things you don't like.

● **Have a balanced life** – Don't get too engrossed with work. Be passionate about what you do but make sure you take time out for yourself and your family otherwise you will go crazy.



cy as we lles tab lished any way. I did bring in a few ideas for the front and the displays, as well as use ful in formation leaflets from the PCTs. It's still quite early on in my career and I'm still trying to establish myself as a pharmacist. Therefore, for me it's more important to focus on the pharmacy side which is why I tend to leave shop floor staff to take care of their sections. I will take on a more active role in the business side of the pharmacy but that will come later.

'The other side of my profession I'd like to get involved in is diabetes management. I come across a lot of patients with diabetes so some time in the future I'd like to branch out in that direction. Obesity, too, is a huge issue now a days and it is something like that I'd devote more time to in the future.'

Critical of the new pharmacy bodies to be launched next year, Parikh feels that things are too vague as they stand. 'In theory I think it's a good thing as I feel strongly about pharmacy having a strong voice, one that is widely recognised and appreciated. And, if by the current set up that is achieved, then that can only mean it's beneficial for the profession. But like I said, that's in theory as things are really vague at the moment and I don't really know how it's going to work out.'

Moving forward, Parikh insisted new roles and responsibilities for pharmacists was a given vision. 'You have pharmacists with a special interest, something they enjoy doing more than the rest. That will enable a more effective community service and a prominent role of pharmacists in the society. Therefore, as a profession, it's definitely moving in the right direction.'

As for his own direction, Parikh – who got married recently – is busy balancing his nine-to-seven work life with time for his personal life, including sports.

'You can't just work 60 hours a week and not have time for yourself. If you work during the week, take the weekend off to recharge yourself. Enjoy things that you really enjoy and that will help your work life as well.'

While Parikh enjoys the business aspect of running a pharmacy, he is more keen on providing increased services to his patients that walk through the pharmacy doors. Terming himself a people person, he loves interacting with patients and building a strong relationship with the community as a result. 'I think that is where the profession is heading as well [towards the services side] rather than being stuck dispensing all day long.'

Considering himself lucky in the sense that his script numbers are generally lower than a lot of other colleagues, Parikh can, as a result, concentrate on providing the various services in his pharmacy. 'I see someone who is doing five to seven thousand prescriptions per month and I can understand how they find it difficult to concentrate on other tasks and services. I think that is something that needs to be ironed out.'

Although wanting a greater role in public health care for pharmacists, Parikh admitted the rewards should complement the work done. 'Although it is beneficial for the profession as well as the individual that an increased number of services are being offered, the reward does seem unfair. I like the fact that I'm doing more and more for the patients but at the same time I would like some sort of reward.'

'The GPs are rewarded highly for work they do, and quite rightly so. But I think emphasis should be put on the pharmacy sector as well.'

Terming MURs an agreed way of interacting with and getting to know the patients, Parikh reminded fellow pharmacists of the reward they carry as well. 'It is labouring in terms of all the paperwork that follows the consultation and it can affect the number of MURs a pharmacist carries out. However, it is a useful tool to carry out and enables you to get involved with patient care on a higher level. It also gives you more

of a voice than the GP.'

Despite being low on his own MUR numbers, Parikh has indeed planned an improvement in the coming weeks, trying to balance pharmacy life with the dispensing and the services he provides. 'Some times it can happen that I advise patients verbally but don't get time to do the paperwork, especially during busy times. That is something that I can relate to. However, there are always quiet periods where you can go and do all the paperwork and make sure the verbal consultation is accounted for.'

Parikh, although being successful at everything he has done so far, is wary of his rawness to the field. Content with establishing himself as a pharmacist before chasing up his other ideas, including an enhanced diabetes management role, he has left much of the shop floor aspect of the pharmacy to the more experienced staff that he has.

'When I started work here, the pharm a-

