

# Parallel imports representative body celebrates landmark anniversary

**Leading members from pharmacy sector paid tribute to the organisation that supports wholesalers**

The leading organisation that supports UK pharmacy wholesalers involved in parallel imports (PIs) celebrated 40 years of making it easier to import medicine from Europe at an event at 30 Euston Square in London on Wednesday, September 11th.

The British Association of European Pharmaceutical Distributors (BAEPD), represents 16 companies, all of whom possess the appropriate licences to source authorised prescription pharmaceuticals from any member state within the European Economic Area (EEA) and to distribute these products into the supply chain in the UK.



From the left: Philippe Ollivier (Mediwin), Bertrand Michel (Mediwin), Renaud Lambert (Mediwin)

The original pharmaceuticals sourced from one country, are repackaged, relabelled, and then sold in the UK. This allows wholesalers to offer these products at more affordable prices compared to the originals.

A parallel imported medicine is the exact same as the original, but in a new package with information leaflets in the patients' local language.

Richard Freudenberg, president of the BAED, paid tribute to the work of entrepreneurs in the pharmacy sector for the success of PIs.

"I cannot myself claim a

personal history back to the beginnings of BAEPD, but when I did join the industry in 1990 (and this no doubt is a well-repeated story across our sector), I was told by a respected commentator that parallel trade in medicines in UK had less than ten years to exist," Freudenberg told guests at the event.

"It is no small tribute to the entrepreneurial skills of the businessmen in this industry (and to the efforts of this association) that we not only continue to exist more than a quarter of a century later, that the sector is flourishing, and that it retains the strong support of the pharmacy fraternity and the Department of Health and Social Care."

The products sourced through PIs are normally used by retail pharmacy, the dispensing general practitioner, hospitals/clinics or other appropriately licensed wholesalers.

The process leads to accessibility and affordability of vital medicine for the patients that need them, while also reducing the expense for the public healthcare systems.

It has been a vital part of



From the left: Nick Kounoupias (Kounoupias IP), Bhoja Karavadra (NSL Group), Kashyap Karia (MedicarePlus), Carl Falzon (CST Pharma), Ravi Karia (Chemilines), Catherine Evans, Richard Freudenberg.



Richard Freudenberg speaking in the background

tackling the medicine supply challenges being faced by community pharmacies and their patients.

Freudenberg urged the government to support the parallel import trade.

"The UK's departure from the European Union in 2020 was naturally a major event for the parallel distribution industry, as it was for much of UK business," he said.

"The UK was a major exporter of medicines to our European counterpart companies, and the failure of UK and EC to find an agreement on, particularly, the issue of exhaustion of IP rights has effectively extinguished the paral-



Ketan Mehta (NSL Group), BAEPD's longest time current member.

lel export trade to Europe.

"However, UK has unilaterally decided, for the time being, to continue to apply rights exhaustion to medicine imports, and thus PIs remain an important contributor to the national economy. In fact, we have seen year on year growth in the import sector since 2021.

"Neither the previous UK administration, nor the current one has shown a particular willingness to resolve this situation permanently, so this topic remains a major concern and subject of representation for the Association."

The BAEPD was formed in 1984 by a small group of pharmaceutical wholesalers partly in response to the first launching of the UK medicine regulator's (then the MCA, now the MHRA) parallel import licencing scheme.

Many milestones have been achieved by the organisation in the intervening years for the benefits of its members, including the interpretation of European law as it applies to free movement of goods, and trademark rights.

"We have been at the forefront of these challenges throughout," said Freudenberg.

"We take pride in these achievements and the resultant market

## BAEPD 40th Anniversary

competition which has resulted in savings for the UK exchequer, our contribution to pharmacy and wholesaler viability, and our alternative supply chain in counteracting the more recent phenomenon of medicine shortages.

“BAEPD has also made use of its centralised purchasing power to bring commercial benefits for its members, not least in access to market data, legal services, and external lobbying expertise.”

Ketan Mehta is the founder of the NSL Group, a family-owned pharmaceutical wholesaler for over 30 years. The company is involved in the importation of pharmaceutical products from the European Union and the wholesale and distribution of pharmaceutical products to customers on a national



From the left: Taybi Mohamedbhai (Day Lewis), Catherine Evans (former BAEPD Secretary), Nick Foster (former BAEPD Secretary-General)

and global level.

He was at the very first BAEPD meeting and has watched the organisation go from strength to strength over the past four decades.

“It was back on 21st March 1984, when the BAEPD was established in the name of the Association of Pharmaceutical Importers (API),” recalled Mehta.

“I remember attending the very first meeting with the founding members - some of the names I



Richard Freudenberg (BAEPD President) with Sukhi Basra (National Pharmacy Association).

can recall are John Whitworth, Jan Mohammed, Brian Lewis, Paul Balcombe and Richard Taylor, whom I’m glad to see is present here today. I was the youngest and the most nervous member, during that first meeting, but was taken in warmly by the names I have just mentioned.

“The BAEPD operated by having a central PLPI licence for all its members to use and also had a central labelling facility at Brecon Pharmaceuticals at Hay on Wey. It was only as member companies got bigger that they started to invest in their own licences and a labelling facility at their own premises.”

Mehta recognised the crucial role the BAEPD played in the early 90s in successfully fighting legal battles brought against parallel import companies by large multinational companies.

“I feel the association is extremely lucky to have very supportive members who although are competitors in business, actually come together very closely in order to combat common challenges such as the ones that I have described before,” he said.

“A very big thank you to past and present members for showing this trait.”



From the left: Hatul Shah (Sigma Pharmaceuticals), Raj Haria (Sigma Pharmaceuticals), Eitan Leibovitch (MPA Business Services), Carl Falzon (CST Pharma), Chris Dancer (A1 Pharmaceuticals), Andrew Stafford (Stafford Pharma).