



## **Pharmig: 22 years of excellence in pharmaceutical microbiology:**

### **A short history**

**by Tim Sandle**

#### **Introduction**

Pharmig is unique amongst microbiology based societies: it is the only organisation for pharmaceutical microbiologists in the UK and Ireland, moreover it is one of the very few pharmaceutical microbiology bodies in the world. Whilst pharmaceutical microbiology has grown in importance, driven by both developments in regulation and innovations in practice, Pharmig has retained its preeminent place. Over the twenty years of its existence Pharmig remains true to its founding principles: to be the voice of pharmaceutical microbiology, to represent the interests of the pharma and healthcare community, and to promote "excellence in microbiology".

Pharmig is an organisation which is run by its members with its strategy carried out by an elected committee. The committee is made up of those who work in the pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors.



Given the role that Pharmig currently plays, from hosting major conferences, to producing high quality publications, and liaising with regulators, it seems difficult to conceive of a time when Pharmig was not around. Such a time did exist and the need for Pharmig coincided with

pharmaceutical microbiology becoming an established discipline in its own right as the discipline emerged out of the shadows of pharmacy schools in universities in the 1970s and from the parent wing of industrial microbiology in the 1980s.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s pharmaceutical microbiology departments became more commonplace in industry, and practitioners began to define themselves as 'pharmaceutical microbiologists'. It was at the time of these early beginnings that the need for a professional body arose. This need was realised by a small group of microbiologists who wanted a forum to debate and discuss ideas, a place to meet and to hear the views of others, a forum to present common viewpoints, and a mechanism to influence regulatory agencies.

This history charts the origins of Pharmig and takes the organisation through to the present day and provides a brief account of how the organisation has developed over the past 20 +years. This history also gives an account of those who have contributed to its success, and the dedication of the volunteer group who have helped to run it for the past 20 years. Looking backwards and forwards there is also a sense of pride, for proud we should be, for Pharmig is our organisation and it is the embodiment of 'excellence in microbiology'.

### **Genesis of an idea**

The idea for Pharmig - the "Pharmaceutical Microbiology Interest Group" - was that of Poly Hajipieris in 1991. Poly, who was working at Cilag Ltd, saw how pharmaceutical microbiology was growing and was frustrated that there was no single group that specifically dealt with the interests and needs of pharmaceutical microbiologists.



*(Cilag Ltd, founding company of Pharmig)*

Poly drew upon her network of pharmaceutical microbiologists and had the vision set-up an initial meeting to explore the idea and possibility of a pharmaceutical microbiology group. The inaugural meeting of PharMIG<sup>1</sup> was hosted by Cilag Ltd. on 26th July 1991 with thirteen companies represented. In an open debate, the attendees unanimously agreed that the existence of an interest group in pharmaceutical microbiology would be very useful and from this meeting PharMIG was conceived and established.

At the first meeting, the attendees elected a chairman and secretary. The first ever chairman of PharMIG was Peter Hickley of SmithKline Beecham. The position of secretary, and thus most of the work and organising, went, appropriately, to Poly Hajipieris. Peter and Poly undertook these roles on a voluntary basis whilst continuing to work in the pharma industry.

The second meeting of PharMIG was held at Boehringer Ingelheim on the 4th December 1991, where the offices of vice-chairman and treasurer were established (and Helen Bakewell was elected as vice-chairman. At this second meeting the assembled delegates decided that each membership should be company based rather than by individual subscription and it was agreed that each company should pay a membership fee of £150 per year. It was also at this second meeting that the first technical discussion took place. The subject was 'computer modelling of water systems', and this consisted of a presentation delivered by Simon Smith of Martindale Pharmaceuticals.

The first few years of PharMIG mainly took the form of technical meetings held at different company sites. The meetings consisted of at least one presentation, a general debate on the main industry topics; and often there was a site tour. Initially there was no separate organising committee: the decisions about the running of the organisation were taken by whoever was present.

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<sup>1</sup> Until 2006 the Pharmig acronym was written PharMIG. It was later changed as part of a rebranding exercise.

## **The early years**

In 1992, with elections remaining for annual terms, Peter Hickley was re-elected as Chairman, with Helen Bakewell and Poly Hajipieris continuing in their roles. By this time membership had more than doubled, reaching thirty-one companies.

For most of 1992 the format remained largely unchanged as company based technical meetings. However, towards the end of the year the first committee meeting was held and PharMIG appointed its first honorary members: Dr Rosemary Baird and Dr Stephen Denyer. Shortly afterwards David Begg and Sally Bloomfield became additional honorary members.

1992 saw PharMIG develop rapidly with the first action groups being set-up. Action groups are one of Pharmig's longest-standing initiatives where groups of interested members get together to examine a subject of interest. Action groups have led to surveys, defining industry best practice, and to publications. The very first action groups were: water testing (led by Neil Rose and Gail Davies); raw materials (led by Colin Wherle and Jill Jennison) and environmental monitoring (led by Paul Lovegrove-Saville).

It was also in 1992 that Poly Hajipieris suggested that PharMIG hold an annual conference. This was agreed by the committee, provided that the event was limited to one hundred delegates. The first conference accounted for 75% of PharMIG's expenditure; nonetheless PharMIG ended the year with £1,650 in its account.

By 1993 PharMIG grew to forty-five member companies, each paying £200 per year. The elections that year saw a change, with Helen Bakewell being elected as chairman and Peter Hickley stepping aside to become vice-chairman. The treasurer was Barry Fitzmaurice (whose prudence meant that PharMIG had £3,000 in its account by the year's end). As a non-profit making body this money was used to fund future developments and growth.

As a sign of how far the industry has moved on, looking back through the window of 2012, one subject which was discussed several times in 1993 was the merits of R2A agar and whether it should be used for the microbiological examination of water. It is on the subject of water microbiology that 1993 saw the first full members survey, conducted by Neil Rose.

The second annual conference was held in 1993. Amongst the 90 attendees was Andy Martin who, by virtue of his current tenure on the committee, probably has the longest continuing active involvement with Pharmig.

### **The Neil Rose years**

In 1994 there was a change with the main committee posts. Neil Rose was elected as chairman and Edward Hansen as the vice-chairman. Arun Acharjya became the secretary, whilst Barry Fitzmaurice continued as treasurer. To assist them, Pharmig's founder, Poly Hajipieris took on the role of administrator and she was, in recognition of founding the group, appointed as a life-time honorary member.

As 1994 drew to an end the accounts showed a positive balance of £7,132 and there were forty-nine company members. At the end-of-the-year meeting the committee discussed whether to establish a newsletter and a national registry of pharmaceutical microbiologists, and took the step of adding laboratory training to the growing list of action groups.

Between 1995 and 1998 PharMIG continued to be overseen by Neil Rose and Edward Hansen, assisted by Poly in the PharMIG office. As a reflection of the changes to the industry, in 1995 the topic of rapid microbiological methods, still a perennial area of debate, was the subject of several presentations and discussions.

The first Pharmig newsletter was launched in 1996, although this was more of a news bulletin rather than the glossy publication developed a few years later. The conferences continued to become the centrepiece of the PharMIG year with the 1996 event chaired by Nigel Halls and featuring Paul Hargreaves (of the then MCA) as the keynote speaker. Over one hundred delegates attended, paying £40 as member or £175 for non-members.



*(Original PharMIG logo, circa 1997)*

PharMIG developed further in 1997, expanding to fifty-five company members, three trade members, and seven honorary members. By the end of this year there was a healthy £8,826 in the account. Some points of interest during the year was a debate as to whether PharMIG should merge with another society (an idea firmly rejected). A second, somewhat archaic point, was whether the news bulletin should be posted onto the internet. This was rejected by the committee on the basis that few members had access to the World Wide Web.

In 1998, Mary-Anne Weatherhead (as secretary) and Bob Johnson (as treasurer) joined the main committee. The conference that year was addressed by Tony Cundell as the keynote speaker. 1998 also saw a LAL action group established (run by Sharon Johnson). Finally, as a nod-back to the previous year, the committee agreed to set-up an e-mail database for the first time.

1998 was Neil Rose's last year as chairman. After five years in the post he remains the longest serving chairman of Pharmig.

### **Towards the new millennium**

In 1999, Edward Hansen, who had served as vice-chairman for five years, was elected chairman. The conference that year saw keynote presentations from William Hewitt and Lucia Clontz. The closing month of 1999 saw the first 'proper' newsletter published, ably edited by Paul Lovegrove-Saville. Paul went on to edit the newsletter until the end of 2006, producing almost forty issues.



*(Updated PharMIG logo circa 2000)*

Major changes were seen within PharMIG as we moved into the new millennium. In many ways, the year 2000 was to prove the most significant in PharMIG's history. In 2000, David Begg, who had long been a supporter of PharMIG, was elected chairman. It was during this year that PharMIG, now ten years old and firmly established within the pharmaceutical community, debated its future structure. At one point PharMIG considered becoming a charity, but eventually embarked down the route of becoming a limited company. This was achieved on 22nd August 2000 (as Company Number 4058017). The committee at the time duly noted that it was achieved largely through the work of Poly Hajipieris and Bob Johnson. Following the successful transformation, Poly was appointed as the Company Secretary. The change in status was announced by David Begg in his newsletter column and described as the “transition of the Group from a private society to an incorporated private limited company...a key change”.

To help with the 'new' organisation and in recognition of PharMIG's growth, Poly Hajipieris was appointed as a full-time administrator. In light of this David Begg said: “Poly’s knowledge and enthusiasm of PharMIG coupled with her administrative skills will prove to be a major factor in securing and developing our future”.

Another major development in 2000 was the establishment of PharMIG's first website, developed and maintained by Martin Sarosi. Action groups continued to thrive and there were eight active groups in 2000, co-ordinated by Hazel Sarosi. These groups were for non-sterile products, disinfectants, environmental monitoring, raw materials, steam sterilisation, proficiency testing, and water testing. The latter group was run by Brian Alexander, who was appointed vice-chairman (a role he held until he stood down, after eleven years service, from the committee in 2010).

It was also in 2000 that the first of many joint conferences were held (a reflection of PharMIG's growing status in the industry). In May 2000, PharMIG ran a major national conference entitled ‘Biological Indicators for Sterilisation Processes’, which it co-hosted with The Royal Pharmaceutical Society in London.

## **A professional body**

In 2001 David Begg and the committee continued to oversee PharMIG's growth as a well-respected professional body. PharMIG continued to work with other organisations, with the lead taken by the cleaning and disinfection action group who, following a major member wide survey, facilitated Pharmig's first hands on training course at the University of Bath. The subject was cleaning and disinfection and the event was co-ordinated by Poly and Rachel Blount, with teaching sessions held by Anthony Smith and Rosamund Baird. This was an event which proved successful and was repeated several times.

At the end of the year, the tenth anniversary was marked at the conference in Peterborough. Tim Sandle's newsletter report stated that the central theme was "the now role and the future role" of the microbiologist. This topic has, appropriately, been returned to for the twentieth conference.

The year 2002 saw some further changes of significance. PharMIG moved premises to a more professional base at The Maltings in Stanstead Abbots where, despite three office moves, Pharmig has remained ever since. It was also during this year that Maxine Moorey joined PharMIG, initially to assist with the growing office administration and, as her newsletter welcome note surmised she was there "to advise on making PharMIG bigger and better", something which has undoubtedly taken place over the past ten years. Maxine was soon appointed Business Development Director and remains with Pharmig today as its Executive Director.

In 2002, PharMIG continued to run important membership surveys, allowing microbiologists to benchmark their operations and practises. The major one that year was conducted by Lynne Arnot who ran a survey on endotoxin testing.

In 2003, David Begg, having taken PharMIG through a major transition, stepped down and Sharon Johnson became the chairperson. During this year the number of one-day meetings was expanded and the newsletter began to publish high quality technical articles and included a popular compliance corner written by Hazel Sarosi, which ran for several years. The focus was on providing more for the membership.

In 2004, the committee was expanded, as a way to draw in more members into active roles, with the appointment of 'Technical Advisors'. It was during this year that Andy Martin



became treasurer and, remaining in post nine years on, he is the longest serving treasurer in Pharmig's history.

PharMIG held its first meeting in Ireland later in 2004, moving its successful training events out of the UK for the first time. The meeting was on the subject of microbiological method validation, with lectures delivered by Brian Alexander, Tim Sandle, Greg McGurk, Kerry Hawitt, Natasha Gibbs and Arun Acharjya.

The Irish event led to several delegates from Ireland attending the annual conference, where the key subject was the new FDA guidance on aseptic filling. In addition to its main conference and training events, PharMIG co-hosted the PCT (Pharmaceuticals, Cosmetic and Toiletries) conference, an association which would continue for many years. Later Pharmig adopted the event completely and it remains a major mainstay of the Pharmig events calendar

### **Re-launch: from PharMIG to Pharmig**

In 2005 Stewart Green was elected chairman of PharMIG and the organisation went through an exercise of examining its aims and values.

Around this time PharMIG began developing publications in addition to the newsletter. This led to, for example, the LAL action group producing a series of LAL fact sheets. Later, in 2006, PharMIG produced its first major publication: "Guide to Disinfectants and their Use in the Pharmaceutical Industry". Whilst written by an expert panel, the guide was primarily shaped by Kim Moorwood, Rachel Blount and Elaine Dymond.

*(Pharmig's first video, 2007)*

Towards the end of 2006, Paul Lovegrove-Saville, after seven years at the helm, stepped down as newsletter editor and in 2007, the newsletter baton was passed onto Tim Sandle and Maxine Moorey, both of whom have continued to produce the quarterly newsletter for members. Other developments in 2007 saw Pharmig's first video produced. The video, which

is still available to watch on YouTube<sup>2</sup>, was shot at Royal London Hospital and at Bio Products Laboratory.



In 2007 Stewart Green led PharMIG through a successful business development review and rebranding exercise. As part of a major three year strategy plan, the PharMIG acronym, together with a new logo, was changed to “Pharmig”.



*(New Pharmig logo, 2007)*

Another milestone was the collaboration between Pharmig and the University of Manchester which led to the launch of the only Pharmaceutical Microbiology MSc in Europe. Called PMAT (Pharmaceutical Microbiology Advanced Training) the degree began on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The programme was shaped by a Pharmig action group – Poly Hajipieris, Stewart Green, Brian Alexander, Bob Johnson and Tim Sandle (Tim and Bob went onto become course tutors), who worked with Professor Peter Gilbert at Manchester. The main driver for the project came from Poly Hajipieris and although no longer associated with Pharmig, the programme continues to run today and has attracted pharmaceutical microbiologists from around the world.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OnQ2sxIHE2s>



*(The PMAT launch event, 2008)*

In 2008 the Pharmig committee was reorganised and the number of committee posts reduced. The executive posts were reorganised with Maxine as the Director and Poly as the Company Secretary. This was with the aim of creating a more focused and business-like committee. Sadly, towards the end of 2008, Poly Hajipieris decided to resign working for Pharmig and a special tribute was paid to Poly at the annual conference.

2008 saw the launch of another major publication, a monograph on non-sterile manufacturing which was produced in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Quality Group (PQG). A year later, in 2009, the Pharmig website was re-launched as a modern, interactive site, offering a series of member exclusive articles, discussion forum, courses, publications and graphics.



*(Pharmig website re-launch in 2008)*

## To the future

In 2009, Stewart Green stepped down after four years as chairman. Stewart was replaced by David Begg, who agreed to return for one year whilst a new chairman could be sought. That new chairman was Tony Mayhall, who took over in 2010.

Tony has overseen further growth and development of Pharmig. The number of publications substantially increased, with more books produced (including an important guide to Pharmaceutical Microbiology Laboratories spearheaded by Julie Roberts) and interactive training CDs. Additionally Pharmig embraced social media with sites on Facebook, LinkedIn and the blogosphere. Over this time Pharmig has continued to host informative and essential conferences and focused one-day training sessions.



*(A selection of Pharmig publications)*

In November 2013 Tony Mayhall stood down and David Keen (GSK) has currently taken over the helm – forging ahead with the growth of Pharmig – exploring new avenues such as India and South Africa and introducing ‘free seminars’ to the members as an additional thank you for their on-going support as part of their membership package

From its origins as a forum for the first generation of 'pharmaceutical microbiologists', with its evolution marked through twenty two successive high quality and successful conferences, Pharmig has continued to grow and develop. Pharmig's position of strength is shown with the organisation continually increasing its Industry, Supplier, NHS and Academic members, a series of vibrant action groups on technical subjects and for suppliers, as series of high quality publications and technical training days, together with successful conferences in the UK and Ireland.

Over the next few years Pharmig will continue to deliver training events, new publications and represent the microbiology community.

Although the organisation has changed, Pharmig continues to meet its original purpose: to represent the pharmaceutical microbiologist, and it has become the foremost pharmaceutical microbiology society in Europe.

Excellence in microbiology: *to the next twenty two years.*

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### **Chairs of Pharmig**

1991	Peter Hickley
1992	Peter Hickley
1993	Helen Bakewell
1994	Neil Rose
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1997	Neil Rose
1998	Neil Rose
1999	Edward Hansen
2000	David Begg
2001	David Begg
2002	David Begg
2003	Sharon Johnson
2004	Sharon Johnson
2005	Stewart Green
2006	Stewart Green
2007	Stewart Green
2008	Stewart Green
2009	David Begg
2010	Tony Mayhall
2011	Tony Mayhall
2012	Tony Mayhall
2013	Tony Mayhall
2014	David Keen