



**Professor Nigel Mathers BSc MD PhD FRCGP DCH
Honorary Secretary of Council**

To: All Faculty Chairs & Faculty Administrators
Copy to: All Members of Council
Myra Work/John Anderson/Ed Wilson

03 August 2017

Dear Colleagues

Meeting of College Council – Saturday, 24 June 2017

June Council began with acknowledgement of those College members who had received awards in the Queen's Birthday Honours List – Council's congratulations go to Prof Graham Charles Murray Watt (CBE) - West Scotland Faculty; Prof Margaret Elizabeth Cupples (OBE) - Northern Ireland Faculty; Dr Nikita Kanani (MBE) - South London Faculty; and Dr Sohail Munshi (NW England Faculty) & Dr Ruth Padday (Wessex Faculty) on award of their BEM.

Council also received the results of the 2017 ballots for College President, nationally-elected Council member (x6), AiT Committee Chair & First5 National Chair :

President (2017-2019)

Prof. Mayur Lakhani

National Council member (2017 – 2020)

Prof. Clare Gerada
Dr Jonathan Leach
Dr John Cosgrove
Dr Stuart Blake
Dr Robert Hampton
Dr Martyn Hewett

AiT Committee Chair

Dr Sophie Lanaghan

First5 National Chair

Dr Jodie Blackadder-Weinstein

All the successful candidates will take up their new roles from November. Council noted that the turnout in the national election was 12.87% - a small increase of 0.37% on last year's turnout figure - but disappointing given that the electorate had been increased by 11,000 new members to include the College's AiTs in the hope this would engender greater engagement. A full analysis of the election data and recommendations for future College elections will be made later to Trustee Board and November Council.

June Council also heard hustings speeches from those candidates standing for the position of Assistant Hon. Secretary (i.e. Hon. Secretary elect). There were 3 applications for the post - two were single-person applications (Dr Sunil Bhanot & Dr Imran Rafi) and - for the first time - one was a job-share application (Drs Jonathan Leach & Victoria Tzortziou-Brown). We shall be reviewing the other College Officer positions to see whether they might be suitable for job-share applications in future. [**Stop press!** – We can advise that Dr Jonathan Leach (Midland Faculty) & Dr Victoria Tzortziou-Brown (North & West London Faculty) have both been successfully elected as Hon. Secretary Elect on a job-share basis. They will take up the some of the duties early on a proleptic basis from September Council, and the full duties of Hon.Secretary following the November AGM.]

Members noted as part of the Chair's announcements, that the RCGP Research & Surveillance Centre would be 50 this year, and celebrations were being planned to be held at the Annual Conference in October. Members were also advised that the CQC had issued its long-awaited consultation on the future regulation of the profession, which was an opportunity for members to input their legitimate concerns about the current regulatory regime, either as part of the overall College response, or individually. The closing date for input was 18 July (for College response) and 6 August (CQC) respectively.

Members noted as part of the Trustee Board Chair's report to Council, the publication of the College's updated Strategic Plan 2017-2020 - "*Great Doctors, Great Care*" - which would be rolled out to all staff, Faculties and other stakeholders shortly. It was also noted that work was being undertaken for a new "collaborative" approach to working for the College between the Officers and Executive Management Team which would enable more flexible and agile management and enhance the ability of the College to seize opportunities as they arose. More details would be reported to the Trustee Board and Council once the model had been firmly established and finalised.

Council also considered update reports on the implementation of the GP Forward View in England, and progress reports on the individual PPF Campaigns in the Devolved Nations. The main concern expressed by all members was that funding promised by politicians (both in England and Devolved Nations) was either not forthcoming or was not reaching frontline practices quickly enough. A common pattern emerging in England appeared to be CCGs / STPs failing to pass on resources intended for general practice and diverting the funds for other uses. Members felt strongly that local CCGs and STPs should be held to account. In the Devolved Nations, success in obtaining appropriate levels of funding for general practice varied according to region, but a common concern for all – funding aside - was the lack of progress in recruiting and/or retaining sufficient numbers of GPs to help ease the current workload pressures.

A potential solution to this intractable problem was considered in a discussion paper about the use of Physician Associates (PAs) in general practice. Anecdotal feedback from those GPs who had worked with PAs in pilot areas was generally very supportive of their use, but Council was concerned at the lack of a regulatory body; the lack of their prescribing rights; potential confusion by patients and the public over their role; and a "cheap fix" by Government (but not cheap for practices) to the fundamental underlying problem of a national shortage of qualified GPs. In the light of various concerns raised by members, Council agreed to revise the paper, and to reconsider it again at the next Council meeting in September.

Council also took a paper looking at the place played by the Independent Contractor model in general practice. The College's evidence and view on the matter to the House of Lords Health Select Committee had been misunderstood and misrepresented in its published report.

In fact the College favoured a “mixed economy” of contractor models - of which the independent contractor model was just one. Following discussion, members agreed to change the College’s position statement by way of clarification to state : “*The College supports GPs working within a range of contractual models for the delivery of general practice, while recognising the benefits and importance of the independent contractor model*”.

Council also considered and agreed a revised International Strategy. The original International Strategy had been agreed for a 10-year period in 2011, but there had been considerable development and change internationally since that time – not least of all Brexit – and it was timely to revisit and review the College’s strategy and make it up to date.

Members also received and agreed a revised report on GPwERs. The original report had been discussed at February Council – this revised report included their comments, which had been taken on board. It was proposed that the College become more pro-active and take a lead in this emerging field, as other bodies would otherwise seek to take advantage both by setting and/or dictating inappropriate standards, thereby limiting the opportunities for GPs to expand their practices into new areas. This recommendation was subject to a successful evaluation outcome from a Dermatology pilot, currently running in conjunction with the British Association of Dermatology (BAD).

The Council also considered two reports from the Standing Group on Over-Diagnosis. The first was an information report profiling and highlighting the work of the Group, which was chaired by Dr Margaret McCartney. The Group was established as a virtual group by Council in June 2014, and has grown considerably both in size, membership and reputation since that time, with major contributions being made both at home and internationally. Although virtual at present, the Group had the potential to do more if properly resourced and integrated into the College and its mainstream clinical and policy activities. The second report was on the troubling rise in personal screening not approved by the UK National Screening Committee. Such screening was potentially dangerous for patients, but also placed inequitable cost burdens on GPs and the NHS responding to worried patients about test results which did not meet recognised thresholds for validity and reliability. Members welcomed and supported the paper, as there were issues of informed consent, proper communication of risks of test results and treatments, and the cost to the NHS. Members were conscious however that the way messages against such screening was presented was important so as not to appear patronising and paternalistic.

Members also noted an information update on the 10-year review of the College’s MRCGP examination. This would be undertaken in line with the new GMC Standards for Curriculum & Assessments “Excellence by Design”, but in addition, external evaluation of the examination will be sought from an assessment expert with an international reputation. The College has now appointed Health Professional Assessment Consultancy, led by Prof. Kathy Boursicot, to undertake this work. Her findings and interim reports will be shared with Trustee Board (as they commissioned the work) and reviewed by the Assessment & Curriculum Development Committee and Professional Training Programme Board. The final report will be reported to November Council for information.

Finally, a reminder that the order of the September Council’s agenda will be reversed and we will be taking clinical and College matters in the morning, with policy/ strategy items taken later in the afternoon. We will be surveying Council after the meeting on this experiment, and will report to November Council with our evaluation and conclusions. Please also note there is no pre-Council workshop planned for September Council, as the evening has been reserved for a valedictory supper for our current President (Dr Terry Kemple) and Hon. Secretary (Prof. Nigel Mathers), both of whom will be demitting office in November after the College AGM.

Members are also reminded that - except for confidential items - the Council agenda, reports and minutes are now published on a dedicated server restricted to RCGP members.

Enjoy the warm weather and the Summer recess

Best Wishes

**Prof Nigel Mathers BSc MD PhD FRCGP DCH
Honorary Secretary of Council**