

ROYAL COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS
RURAL AND REMOTE PRACTICE STANDING GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the Standing Group held in the Old Library, Royal College of General Practitioners, 14 Princes Gate, Hyde Park, London, SW7 1PU on Monday 26 March 2007 at 10.30 a.m.

Present: Dr Gordon Baird – Chair

Professor Sheena Asthana
Dr Aidan Egleston
Dr Martin Green
Dr Paul Kettle
Dr Iain Mungall
Dr Jane Randall-Smith

In attendance: Mike Whelan
Mr David Inman (Rural Service Partnership)

1. Apologies

Received from Dr John Elder, Dr David Johnston, Dr James Moore, Dr Catti Moss, Dr Malcolm Ward, Dr Richard West, Dr John Wynn-Jones.

Aidan Egleston, who was deputising for Richard West (DDA), was welcomed to the meeting

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2006 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising

3.1 Academy paper

Iain Mungall reported that his paper had been considered by the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges at its meeting in December 2006. The Academy had decided not to publish the paper, but it would be subsumed into a report being written by Sir Ian Gilmore.

Iain Mungall further reported that he had published the paper on his own website, and it could be found here www.ruralhealth.co.uk. The Institute of Rural Health will also be posting the report on its website. Meanwhile, Iain Mungall would be presenting the report to key parliamentarians.

Jane Randall-Smith undertook to issue a press release about the report from the Welsh Conference which was taking place the next day.

Action: Jane Randall-Smith

Gordon Baird reported that the Kerr Report in Scotland concentrated on secondary and tertiary care. Implementation appeared to have stalled. It was further noted that there was no rural representation on either the Foundation Year 1 or 2 groups.

Gordon Baird would follow up with the Chair-elect for Scottish Council, concerns about the lack of implementation of the Kerr Report.

Action: Gordon Baird

4. Rural and Remote Healthcare

The Group members were informed that a paper had been prepared by the Chairman of Council, Professor Mayur Lakhani, on the issue of giving rural and remote health care a high priority. This paper was discussed at the Council Executive Meeting on 25 January.

The Group discussed the implications of the report and how the momentum could be maintained for the Group's aspiration to form a Rural Faculty within the College. It was felt that a Rural Faculty could play a key role in 'rural-proofing' College policy through identifying rural implications for draft policy papers. The issue of recertification and the College's role in developing this for GPs was highlighted as another strand have a great impact on rural and remote doctors.

The Group explored such ideas as defining and identifying rural members through postcodes. Defra might also be able to provide useful information. It was also suggested that a definition of rurality would be helpful

Explore any profiling that has been done on defining rurality and remoteness by postcode

Action: Sheena Asthana

Explore with the Director of Membership & Development, possibility of interrogating the membership database by postcode to identify rural members

Action: Mike Whelan

The Chair would contact the British Journal of General Practice with a view to having an articles published in the 'Back Pages' section.

Action: Gordon Baird

5. RCGP Conference – 4-6 October session on “Re-accreditation issues for rural practice”

The Group discussed the content of the Rural and Remote Group session that would take place at the RCGP Conference in Edinburgh.

The following areas were considered:

- Out of Hours accreditation in Scotland
- Rural doctors undertaking more than core services
- Identifying what is different about Rural and Remote practice

The session could explore the issues of

- how is re-accreditation to be made realistic
- how is it to be made accessible and appropriate
- the need to balance quality and access.
- The need for re-accreditation to be 'rural-proofed'
- The issue of dispensing in rural and remote areas.

It was also hoped to have a video link with the Welsh Institute of Rural Health.

6. Rural Service Partnership

David Inman, from the Rural Service Partnership, was welcome to the meeting. David gave a brief introduction on the Partnership, which had originally been formed from special interest group within local government to strengthen the rural input. The Partnership was quite wide ranging, but was keen to develop links with the health care sector to push forward the rural agenda. The Partnership was keen to present an overview of services within the rural communities.

David was seeking for the Rural Group to affiliate with his organisation.

The Chair stressed that the Group was supportive of the work of the Partnership, but that the College, being a charity, was a non-political organisation and it was felt that it would not be appropriate to become a member of the Partnership.

David Inman was thanked for his presentation and discussion with the Group.

Mike Whelan would seek clarification from the Officers Breakfast Group on:

- i. the Rural and Remote Standing Group's status; and
- ii. the proposal for the Group to affiliate with the Rural Service Partnership.

7. Organising a joint event with Rural Health Forum/Institute of Rural Health

The Group discussed possible topics and highlighted multiple deprivation in particular.

The Group also discussed funding for the event. It was noted that funding opportunities with Defra were currently on hold.

Mike Whelan would forward details of the planned event to the College's funding development department seeking help with locating potential sources of funding.

Action: Mike Whelan

The Group considered what type of joint event should be planned.

8. RCGP Website/electronic communication

The Group requested that the minutes of meetings be placed on the College's website.

Action: Mike Whelan

9. New Editor for Country Matters

It was noted that Iain Mungall was standing down as the Editor of 'Country Matters' and a replacement was being sought.

Paul Kettle had agreed to take over. The Group were reminded to send their contributions for the next issue to Paul.

10. Report and items from the Chairman

Fiona van Zwanenburg

The Chair reported that he had, on behalf of the group, presented Fiona van Zwanenburg with a year's subscription to the National Trust plus a cash sum. The Chair had also given Kathleen Dyer a present to thank her for all the work she had done for the Group. He had received a thank you letter from Fiona for the gift and good wishes for her retirement.

Training Curriculum

A request had been received from Jim Douglas for help on the training curriculum for Foundation Years 1 and 2. Input was needed on the rural perspective and also dispensing doctors. The Chair would write to Jim Douglas on the matter.

Action: Gordon Baird

11. Reports from Members

Members were given the opportunity to update the group on work in their particular areas.

Jane Randall-Smith reported on a cross-border event for Wales and England to look at prescription issues. It was also noted that the Welsh smoking ban in public places was due to commence in the next week.

Sheena Asthana reported on research she was currently working on which had highlighted that NHS funding deficits were higher in rural areas. Significant differences in waiting time lengths had also become apparent.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

13. Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting would be by teleconference and would take place in late April or early May. The next formal meeting of the Group would be planned for the autumn 2007. Dates of both meetings to be confirmed.