



Royal College of
General Practitioners

**RCGP Northern Ireland
Annual Review
2008/09**

RCGP Northern Ireland Political Engagement

RCGP Northern Ireland has continued to seek creative opportunities to engage with key decision makers/formers. Letters of introduction and information about the College have been sent to all Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and also to a plethora of media correspondents in NI. The RCGP NI Chairman has met with several of the major political parties, on an informal basis, to promote the work and ethos of the College to them and to begin building dialogue.

The RCGP Northern Ireland Council has been involved in various political and public affairs activities as follows:

- Meeting with political party advisors on both health and general policy
- Briefing pack to all members of the Health Committee, asking for the opportunity to meet at the earliest convenience.
- Development and circulating a briefing on public affairs issues to all the members on a fortnightly basis
- Providing an information paper to all members on the position of all the political parties concerning health related issues.

RCGP Northern Ireland also developed a monthly news-sheet for NI members to highlight current political developments in regard to primary care. The newsletter covers “News in Brief”, “Public Affairs” and “Politics at a glance” for NI members, which were published on the RCGP Northern Ireland website and the link was emailed to all members as a reminder.

The RCGP Northern Ireland is currently finalising its Public Engagement Plan which will form part of the RCGP Northern Ireland Operational Plan 09 – 11. The plan will set out clear objectives and actions to assist the RCGP Northern Ireland in establishing relationships within the political arena in NI.

Implementing the recommendations of the Review of Public Administration (RPA)

On 1 April 2009 the new health structures in NI came into effect. The reforms included the establishment of the new Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, the Patient and Client Council and the Business Services Organisation. These organisations will streamline and replace a number of existing health and social care bodies.

RCGP Northern Ireland is currently developing a series of operational actions with the aim of being ready to engage with the new commissioning bodies shortly after they become fully operational next year. The council will be seeking to establish good working relationships. A meeting has already taken place between members of the council and the Health Protection Agency with a view to promoting the work and initiatives of the College in NI.

The Future of General Practice in NI – RCGP Northern Ireland/Northern Ireland General Practitioners Committee (NIGPC) Joint Document

Work continues between RCGP Northern Ireland and NI GPC on the development of this important document. To date, full consultations have taken place with all local stakeholders and the strategy is in its final development stages. In order to ensure a patient-centred focus for the document a special workshop for the patient participation groups from both RCGPNI and NIGPC was organised which aimed to facilitate discussion of the core themes and actions of the strategy and bring forward patient focused comments for inclusion in the final version.

The document aims to identify the key issues/challenges facing general practice in NI over the next ten years.

A series of strategic objectives, actions and lead organisations have been documented for each objective and currently these are being refined and commented upon.

Committees and Forums

RCGPNI Patients in Practice (PiP) Committee

The PiP group held a conference January 2009 which highlighted the benefits to GP practices which can be achieved by supporting the development of a practice patients' forum. In addition to speakers from the PiP group there were representatives from practice patients' groups and GPs.

The PiP committee continues to explore the potential for a practical project to assist the needs of General Practitioners in communicating with and/or dealing with patients with learning disability.

In order to further promote its work, the PiP group has also recently engaged in correspondence with the Chief Executive of the Patient and Client Council for Northern Ireland and hope to meet with them in December.

RCGP Northern Ireland has now attributed pages on the web-site to promote and support the PiP committee. This will be used for general information for Patients, GPs, Practice Managers and Patient Participation groups in NI and to support the development of practice based patient groups. In addition, PiP is also using the site to identify other patient groups in NI with a view to establishing productive networking.

PiP has also updated its promotional leaflet in advance of a series of meetings with key stakeholders in NI. The leaflet explains the objectives and membership of PiP and promotes the support of RCGP Northern Ireland in its further development

At their most recent meeting in October the Group elected a new Chair, Alan Braiden.

RCGP Northern Ireland Practice Managers Forum

RCGP Northern Ireland has supported the networking of practice managers in the country for over 5 years. Practice Managers are an integral and important support to our members and a relationship with the College is of mutual benefit. Recently, to assist managers, the Council has developed a web based discussion forum exclusively for NI Practice Managers to aid networking and support. Over 140 Practice Managers have registered with the site and feedback has been extremely positive.

Anita McCreesh, who is the current RCGP NI Practice Manager of The Year, said of the site *"This is the best development which has happened for Practice Managers in NI for years. Practice Managers can become quite isolated and It is wonderful to be able to ask for advice and guidance from colleagues. The work which we do directly supports the Colleges members in their everyday practice. I commend RCGP Northern Ireland for developing the forum, I think it is marvellous!"*

Now that the College's Foundation for General Practice has been officially launched RCGP Northern Ireland hopes that the Practice Manager's Forum will be an excellent network from which to promote this development.

Joint Initiatives

RCPsych in Northern Ireland

RCGP Northern Ireland is delighted to have forged closer working relationships with a sister college, RC Psych. A very successful joint conference was held on 20th March 2009 in Belfast entitled "Mental Health and Primary Care" and RCGP Northern Ireland was delighted to welcome Dr Clare Gerada as a key note speaker at the conference. The reorganisation of mental health care in NI has stimulated a new focus on primary and community settings. The conference brought together professional groups to discuss best practice and to map a way forward for Northern Ireland. Professor Louis Appleby from University of Manchester was also a key- note speaker and he gave an insight into some of his work in regards to mental health reform. RCGP Northern Ireland aims to build on the relationship with this, and other Royal Colleges to develop closer links.

Royal College of Nursing

RCGP Northern Ireland is also currently working with the Royal College of Nursing on a joint Symposium on Thromboembolism which is scheduled to take place in the first quarter of next year in Belfast to coincide with the launch of review of the NICE guidelines.

Supporting Members

Training & Development

RCGP Northern Ireland faces unique challenges in the delivery of educational programmes to GPs in NI. Careful identification of relevant topics is paramount in an effort to attract at least a “break-even” number of attendees. However, RCGP Northern Ireland is keen to continue offering creative opportunities to members and to this end the following events took place during the year:-

RCGP Northern Ireland Saturday Symposium

After a very successful GP Symposium in October 2008, RCGP Northern Ireland has continued to build on this format. The Spring Saturday Symposium took place in May with the focus on haematology. The key speakers and workshops examined good practice and practical guidance for GPs in relation to DVT and anaemia. There was also a focus on how to implement learning into the practice. In response to demands from NI members 3 unrelated practical sessions were also added. It is hoped to develop the series of Saturday Symposiums as a regular calendar item for NI GPs.

Managing Substance Misuse Certificate Part 2

RCGP Northern Ireland has successfully run a second programme of the Part 2 Certificate in Managing Substance Misuse. At the start of March, 10 local delegates, 5 GPs and 5 members of Community Addition Teams, all successfully completed their final assessments. The course was supervised by a UK tutor and assessments were carried out by a UK assessor to ensure calibration with other Substance Misuse certificate courses across the UK. The programme was supported by the DHSSPSNI and RCGP Northern Ireland hopes to be able to build on this relationship to establish the training on a recurring annual basis.

Quality Outcomes Framework Training

In response to local demand a two day QoF Training event has been organised in Antrim and Londonderry, to take place 19th/20th Nov to support GPs and their Practice Managers. There has been a great deal of interest in these events from both participants and potential sponsors, and it is hoped that further training events can be run next year.

Membership Development

Associates in Training

RCGP Northern Ireland has been working with AITs to promote the College and to attract new AIT members to join.

During the year the following successes have been achieved:

- An AIT member has been newly elected to NI Council
- A speaker from the College has gone to Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Association to speak to ST1/2/3's and promote the College
- Agreed NI specific insert for the AIT Newsletter which is centrally produced.

Although the planned 'Meet the College' event was not able to take place last year, funding has now been secured and it will go ahead before the end of the financial year.

Membership

RCGP Northern Ireland has been regularly reviewing our membership databases to identify new members and provide them with an introduction to the College.

We have also been promoting Fellowship where possible, and have three new applications as well as a member achieving Fellowship this year.

Publications

Controlled Drugs Register

RCGP Northern Ireland has been working closely with Dr Colin Fitzpatrick on the design and print of a new Controlled Drugs Register. This has been designed to meet both the needs of a change in legislation and the desire for a practical solution to the administration of controlled drugs. This has been approved by the Department of Health and the College in NI has already received a high level of interest. It is hoped that it will be a successful initiative which can rolled out throughout the UK.

Promoting Excellence

Celebrating General Practice

Saturday 6th December saw the seventh "*Celebrating General Practice*" evening for RCGP Northern Ireland at the Dunadry Hotel outside Belfast. The event has grown tremendously in popularity and is an opportunity for GPs, practice staff, family and friends to celebrate the achievements of General Practice throughout the year and this year RCGP Northern Ireland was delighted to welcome colleagues from RCGP Scotland to the evening.

The event is a mixture of awards presentation, celebration and poignant reminders of the impact of high quality care on patients. Awards presented on the night included: nMRCGP - membership certificates, Top Scoring nMRCGP pass in NI, Fellowship of RCGP, Quality Practice Award, Practice Accreditation Award, Out of Hours Accreditation Award, RCGP Northern Ireland Patient Nomination Award, Practice Manager of the Year 2008 and Practice Administration Team of The Year 2008.

Planning for the future

RCGP Northern Ireland Operational Plan 2008 – 2011

The first draft of the new plan was adopted by NI Council in September.

This details a number of actions for the three year period until November 2011 and is based on 4 bodies of work:

- The RCGP Strategic Plan
- Strengthening General Practice - A Proposal to Enhance the Organisation and Development of General Practice across N Ireland – approved by NI Council in May 2008
- The Future of General Practice 2008 – 2018 NIGPC RCGPNI joint strategy
- Locally relevant actions and aspirations.

Further details of the plan for 2009/10 will be made available as soon as possible.

**RCGP Northern Ireland
November 2009**