NEWS

PROFESSOR STEPHEN FIELD APPOINTED CHAIRMAN ELECT OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Professor Stephen Field RCGP is to become next Chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP). Professor Field will succeed current RCGP Chairman, Professor Mayur Lakhani CBE, who finishes his three year term of office in November 2007. Professor Field has a long involvement with the College – he is currently Chair of its Professional Development Board and spearheaded the introduction of the new GP training curriculum. A practising GP in inner-city Birmingham, Professor Field, is the Regional Postgraduate Dean for West Midlands Deanery and a member of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB). He is Honorary Professor of Medical Education, University of Warwick, and Honorary Professor in the School of Medicine, University of Birmingham, UK. He has had many academic papers and books published and is married with two children.

RCGP SETS OUT THE PRINCIPLES, PURPOSE AND FRAMEWORK FOR RECERTIFICATION FOR GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

The RCGP has announced a set of principles that will underpin its proposed system of recertification. The principles have been approved by Council on the recommendation of the Recertification Steering Group (RSG) which is a large inclusive group of stakeholders. The principles are based around four “pillars” - Essential General Practice; Managed CPD (reflection and learning); Modern Professional practice in the specialism (performance), and Professional Standing Re-licensure (generic standards) - with good appraisal acting as the ‘cement’ binding the pillars together. Together, they provide a high level framework of reference for the College’s newly-formed Recertification Steering Group and its Recertification Technical Group (RTG). The RCGP has also confirmed that there will be a national consultation on the detailed model of recertification to ensure that there is ample opportunity for the profession to be involved in shaping the scheme.

RCGP ISSUES DOCUMENT ON THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF GENERAL PRACTICE

NHS reforms have created pressures, challenges and opportunities for general practice. Expectations of patients, society, the wider health community and GPs themselves are changing. Autumn 2007 will see the launch of the College’s landmark document defining new and better models for improving patient care - a “roadmap” for the future of general practice. The roadmap demonstrates the enormous potential of primary care and provides a framework for bringing together key developments in quality, education, clinical excellence and workforce.

RCGP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A full and exciting programme has been confirmed for the inaugural RCGP annual primary care conference, being held in Edinburgh from Thursday 4 to Saturday 6 October 2007. Plenary topics include the political future, a CMO debate, recertification, responding to change and international perspectives; while over 40 concurrent sessions over the 3 days look at a wide range of other topics. At a Glance readers can still claim the early bird discount (which closed on 30 June). Just quote AAG007 on your booking form. For more information about the event and to book online please visit the conference website.

RCGP SHOWS SOLIDARITY WITH JUNIOR HOSPITAL DOCTORS OVER MTAS

The RCGP is very concerned to hear of the severe problems faced by junior hospital doctors over the Medical Training Application Service (MTAS) (www.rcgp.org.uk/default.aspx?page=5397). Although the recruitment system has worked relatively well for general practice, the College will be making a robust and independent submission to the review of Modernising Medical Careers (MMC) led by Professor Sir John Tooke. This follows discussion of the key issues over both MTAS and MMC at the June meeting of College Council.

‘BEING A GENERAL PRACTITIONER’ - NEW RESOURCE TO HELP GP TRAINERS LAUNCH TRAINING CURRICULUM

A new booklet and CD Rom to support GP trainers in implementing the first-ever GP training curriculum has been produced by the RCGP. To mark the curriculum’s launch in August 2007, almost 5,000 trainers around the country have received a copy of Being a General Practitioner, the curriculum’s core statement that sets out the professional competencies necessary for UK general practice in today’s NHS. A historic milestone in GP education, the curriculum has been given unconditional approval by the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) and will benefit patients, trainees, GP educators and the NHS as it means that every GP Specialty Registrar will receive the same quality standard of training regardless of where in the UK they are based. The curriculum will transform the three-year period of postgraduate medical education known as Specialty Training for General Practice, which runs from the end of the Foundation Programme to the award of a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT).

ASSOCIATES IN TRAINING

From August 2007 there will be a single training and assessment system for UK trained doctors wishing to obtain a CCT (Certificate of Completion of Training) in General Practice. Satisfactory completion of the scheme will be an essential

A guide to recent College activities AUTUMN 2007
requirement for entry to the General Medical Council’s GP Register and for membership of the Royal College of General Practitioners. A new membership package for doctors in Specialty Training for general practice is being launched to coincide with the start of the nMRCGP. Trainees will be able to register as Associates in Training (AIT) of the College and to access a package of benefits that includes the certification, assessment (including e-portfolio) and membership services they require at this stage of their career. As an AIT they will be joining as an Associate of the College and upon successful completion of their training, they will be eligible to be Members of the College.

UNIFIED ROUTE TO FELLOWSHIP CELEBRATES 100 CANDIDATES
Since 1st April 2006 the unified route has been operating having replaced FBA and FBN. In May of this year, the 100th candidate registered to apply. 33 members have so far been either elected as Fellows or recommended to Council for election. Family doctors David and Vanessa Whillier have been awarded Fellowships, the father and daughter work together at Woodlands Health Centre in Paddock Wood, Tonbridge. Dr David Whillier says: “Preparing for Fellowship was hard work, but working together with Vanessa really helped. The practice team has been very supportive. Overall it was a very worthwhile experience, both personally and professionally.” For information visit www.rcgp.org.uk/fellowship, contact your Faculty or email fellowship@rcgp.org.uk

RCGP LAUNCHES ONLINE STUDENT FORUM FOR MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATES
Medical students considering a career in general practice from September 2007 will be able to access a wealth of information about becoming a GP by logging on to the RCGP’s new online student forum. The Student Forum is designed to support students through their time at medical school and onto the Foundation programme by providing information and careers guidance about general practice. As well as featuring information about becoming a GP, life as a family doctor, interview and CV advice, the forum also allows registered users to access online publications, chat rooms and news bulletins and offers a range of benefits including discounts at the RCGP bookshop and use of the College's library services.

TOP RESEARCH AWARD FOR WOOPING COUGH STUDY
A study, urging doctors to be more alert to the signs of whooping cough in school age children, has won the 2006 RCGP Merck Sharp and Dohme Limited (MSD) Research Paper of the Year Award. Led by Dr Anthony Harnden FRCPG, a GP and lecturer at Oxford University, the study involved taking blood samples from 172 children, aged 5-16 years, in the Oxfordshire area. These individuals had previously presented to their GP with a persistent cough lasting 14 days or more. Results revealed that 64 of the 172 participants had evidence of a recent Bordetella pertussis infection, the bacterium that causes whooping cough, and almost 86% of these had been fully immunised against whooping cough. The authors of the paper called on GPs to consider whooping cough when diagnosing school age children presenting with a persistent cough lasting two weeks or more.

PATIENTS PRIZE THE PERSONAL APPROACH IN PRIMARY CARE
Being able to see a GP they know and trust remains important to the majority of patients, according to a study published in the British Journal of General Practice (BjGP). 1,437 patients aged between 18-80 years from 22 practices and a walk-in centre in West London and Leicestershire responded to a questionnaire about their preferences and experiences of continuity in primary care. The study Interpersonal continuity of care: a cross-sectional survey of primary care patients’ preferences and their experiences found that interpersonal continuity was important to between 63 and 75 per cent of patients, particularly those with poor health consulting with routine problems. The majority of patients also wanted to consult someone perceived as taking time to listen and with information about their clinical history. In its conclusion, the study highlighted a need for practices to have flexible appointment systems to take account of the needs of people in work, and those who have difficulty in negotiating for what they want.

GUIDANCE
RCGP WELCOMES NEW GUIDANCE WHICH STRIKES AT THE HEART OF BEST PRACTICE
NICE and the NCCPC issued new guidance on the secondary prevention of Myocardial Infarction recently. Full details of the new guidance can be found on the NICE website. Commenting on the guidance Professor Mayur Lakhani, RCGP Chairman, said: “Having a heart attack used to be a life sentence for patients, now it is possible for most patients to lead healthy and fulfilling lives. This requires a high standard of modern medical care and for patients to follow lifestyle advice - which is why this clear and comprehensive guidance is so important and why practising GPs like myself, together with practice nurses, find documents like this invaluable. Although GPs already provide a high standard of care in everyday practice, patients who have had heart attacks require a cocktail of drugs and this document from NICE is welcome because it sets out clear arrangements for best practice. I would urge all those in the NHS involved in looking after patients who have had heart attacks to implement the guidelines.”

RCGP LAUNCHES NEW HEPATITIS C GUIDANCE
New guidance to improve the management of Hepatitis C in primary care has been launched by the College’s Sex, Drugs and HIV Task Group and Substance Misuse Unit. It seeks to increase awareness of Hepatitis C transmission and its prevention, along with improved testing, diagnosis and treatment. The guidance is aimed at GPs, practice nurses and clinicians working in primary care, where it is estimated that between eight to 18 infected patients are on every practice list. Prevention, Testing, Treatment and Management of Hepatitis C in Primary Care (RCGP Guidance) www.smmgp.org.uk/download/guidance/guidance003.pdf

GUIDANCE FOR PRIMARY CARE PRACTITIONERS ON HOW TO HELP PREVENT SUICIDE AMONGST OLDER PEOPLE
A new resource to assist family doctors in preventing suicide in older people is now available from the Royal College of General Practitioners. The College’s Mental Health Group has worked with Staffordshire University and the Royal College of Nursing to produce a fact sheet to help primary care practitioners identify and support older people they suspect may be depressed and even suicidal. The sheet ‘Too little, too old, too late?’ contains key background information and statistics, ways for primary care doctors and nurses to raise awareness of the issue and what to look out for during a consultation.

If you have any questions or would like any further information about any of the projects mentioned please e-mail membership@rcgp.org.uk or call +44 (0) 20 7589 8710.