

# Meeting of Council: 13 November 2004

Council held its first meeting for the year 2004–2005 on Saturday 13 November.

## **CHAIRMAN AND OFFICERS OF COUNCIL, CHAIRS OF NETWORKS AND COMMITTEES**

This was the first meeting of the new Council year, and Council elected Dr Mayur Lakhani as Chairman for the next 3 years. Dr Nigel Sparrow and Dr Graham Archard were appointed as Vice Chairs of Council, and Dr Archard will continue in his role as Chair of Clinical Network. Dr Sunil Bhanot and Dr Clare Gerada were elected as Chair of Publishing and Medical Ethics Committees respectively, and Dr Theo Schofield as Chair of Quality Network. Dr Eric Kelly joins Dr Kate Adams as an elected GP Registrar Observer on Council.

Council was pleased to welcome a number of new faculty representatives on Council; a full list is available on the college intranet for access by faculties and staff.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING: 12 NOVEMBER 2004**

Dr Roger Neighbour as President led a very well attended and successful AGM, which was again held at The Victoria Park Plaza Hotel. A total of 87 Fellows were appointed as well as five Honorary Fellowships. A number of special awards were also made. A stimulating James Mackenzie Lecture was given by Dr Moira Stewart, Department of Family Medicine, University of Ontario, entitled *Reflections on the Patient–Doctor Relationship — from Evidence and Experience*.

Northwest England Faculty gave an exciting presentation to promote the 2005 College Spring Meeting to be held in Blackpool from 8–10 April 2005. For full information and to register for the conference please go to the website at [www.blackpool2005.com](http://www.blackpool2005.com).

Following the AGM, a reception for all

those attending was held at Princes Gate. Professor David Haslam, having received many plaudits for his work over the past 3 years was presented with a painting from Council members. Dr Tina Ambury was formally thanked for all her work and also presented with a gift.

## **BUDGET STRATEGY 2005–2006**

The broad principles of the Honorable Treasurer's budget strategy were agreed by Council. The revised format for the budget will reflect the work outlined in the College Strategic Plan.

## **NHS WORK PROGRAMME ON 'PHYSICIAN PRACTITIONERS'**

Council expressed considerable concern about this initiative and it was agreed that there should be a strategy for limited engagement, as set out by the Chairman in the final paragraph of the document.

## **PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE OF PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS FOR GPs**

The revised document was approved by Council, but it was agreed that further changes might be required once the outcome of the Shipman Inquiry Report is known. It may not be possible to incorporate changes in light of the government's response to the enquiry for the February Council meeting, but any changes needed following the finalised GMC guidance on licensing and revalidation will be incorporated and a further draft will go to that meeting. Work will also be needed to cross-reference our document with those produced by other Royal Colleges to ensure consistency.

## **ASSISTED DYING FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL BILL**

Following misleading press reports on the College position on this issue, a thorough audit of the College's action and policy was carried out. This demonstrated to

Council that there had been no change in the College position. However, it was agreed that a full debate on the Bill should take place at the February Council meeting and Dr Clare Gerada, Chair of Medical Ethics Committee, was asked to produce a paper outlining the key issues to inform the debate.

## **MOTION TO COUNCIL**

The South London Faculty put forward a motion seeking a review of the 3-year training period for GPs proposed by Modernising Medical Careers to bring it in line with the length of time given to other specialties. Following a thoughtful debate, the motion was amended and accepted with the revised wording:

*'... that Council reviews the content and context of training as referred to in Modernising Medical Careers so that it permits acquisition of the appropriate competencies and is of appropriate length'.*

The Interim Professional Training Committee (chaired by Dr Mayur Lakhani) will be considering the motion and will be preparing a paper for further consideration at the January meeting of the Council Executive Committee.

## **THE FUTURE OF ACADEMIC GENERAL PRACTICE**

Chair of the Research Network, Nigel Mathers, presented this paper to Council. It was agreed that he and Professor Roger Jones, Chair of Conference of Academic Organisations in General Practice (CAOGP), should form a small group and prepare a proposal for the foundation of an Academic Forum to be brought back to Council at a future date.

## **THE FUTURE OF SPRING MEETINGS**

It was agreed that the proposal for a

## Diary

national primary care conference be taken forward, but that in order that partnership options be explored in more detail, the new meeting format would be deferred until 2007. Arrangements for the Spring Meeting in 2006 will be brought back to Council during 2005.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like any further information on the matters discussed above or any other issues we covered at Council then please do not hesitate to contact me by email via [honsec@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:honsec@rcgp.org.uk).

The Council will next meet on Saturday 12 February 2005 at 9am at Princes Gate.

**MAUREEN BAKER**

**12 January**

Child Health Surveillance Course  
The Woodlands Conference Centre,  
Chorley

Contact: Debbie Leyland  
E-mail: [dleyland@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:dleyland@rcgp.org.uk)  
Tel: 01925 662351

**14 January**

MRCGP Exam Course (residential)  
The Newton Hotel and Highland  
Conference Centre, Nairn

Contact: Alison Swanson  
E-mail: [nscotland@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:nscotland@rcgp.org.uk)  
Tel: 01463 705539

**18 January**

Cannabis and the Primary Care  
Practitioner

RCGP, Princes Gate, London  
Contact: Nikki Whitelock  
E-mail: [nwhitelock@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:nwhitelock@rcgp.org.uk)  
Tel: 020 7344 3124

**26 January**

Mental Health in Clinical Practice  
Course — Module 2  
The Woodlands Conference Centre,  
Chorley

Contact: Jackie Dartnell  
E-mail: [jdartnell@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:jdartnell@rcgp.org.uk)  
Tel: 01925 662351

**29 January**

Annual Fellows Meeting  
Arundel House Hotel, Cambridge

Contact: Annemarie McCarty  
E-mail: [jc03@dial.pipex.com](mailto:jc03@dial.pipex.com)  
Tel: 01223 884324

**31 January**

MRCGP Examination Preparation  
Course  
Langstone Campus, University of  
Portsmouth

Contact: Carol White  
E-mail: [cwhite@rcgp.org.uk](mailto:cwhite@rcgp.org.uk)  
Tel: 01264 355005

## Neville Goodman

## LITTLE VICTORIES AND A LARGE LOSS

The creationists in the US are changing tack. They posit a new theory called 'intelligent design', which they are pushing for inclusion in school biology curricula. They maintain their cry that evolution is no more than a theory, but this is just playing with words. Evolution is a theory in the sense that we can't run an experiment to see if human beings develop from an ancestor that resembles an ape, but there is enough circumstantial evidence for evolution being the only sensible way of describing how the world that we know came about. We can watch what happens to white moths in sooty landscapes, and bacteria exposed to antibiotics, and we know about the genetic code. Evolution looks like a good explanation to me. There is no evidence for intelligent design or its intelligent designer, other than a failure of imagination — and there is no way of testing it at all.

So, no victory for anyone there, but I claim one on another ground. I've been holding my breath, but the *Observer* does seem to have demoted the Barefoot Doctor. He's still there, but with only a half-page of touchy-feely stuff; he no longer gives quasi-medical advice on readers' problems. Other than the occasional supportive e-mail, there is little enough visible result from what I write, which I see as incontrovertibly logical and unimpeachable attacks on unsustainable premises, so I shall claim Barefoot's demotion as a victory, albeit a little one.

Now to something that I simply cannot let pass without comment. It's no longer topical, and it's not medical, except in the sense that a heart attack was its cause. John Peel died in October. I used to listen to him every night. Don't tell the BBC but I have cassette tapes full of stuff that he played. Failure to acknowledge a death is common when someone close dies, but there are different ways of being close and I find it difficult to accept that Peelie is dead. And I was amazed at the reaction in the country to the death of a mere DJ: not just obituaries — even a *Weather Girl* (*It's raining men*) got one of those — but full pages and double-page spreads, and stories that went on for days. To all those who, like me on hearing the news, went straight over to the hi-fi and played the Undertones' *Teenage Kicks* and cried: I know how you feel.