



"In the same way that smoking was regarded as a normal part of life until doctors began to speak out about the risks and people's behaviour began to change, doctors and health professionals are speaking out about the risks of nuclear weapons."

REFERENCE

1. General Medical Council. The duties of a doctor registered with the General Medical Council. 2019. <https://www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/good-medical-practice/duties-of-a-doctor> [accessed 7 Mar 2019].

Treatment not Trident

On 22 September 2018, health professionals from all over the country, among them many GPs, joined thousands of people at Faslane base on the Clyde to protest about Trident and make the point that the resources being squandered on nuclear weapons are resources desperately needed by health and social services, and to combat climate change. 'Treatment not Trident.'

As the General Medical Council states, the duty of a doctor is to *'Protect and promote the health of patients and the public'*¹ and such are the potentially catastrophic health effects of nuclear weapons that we have a duty to ensure that they are never used, either intentionally or by accident. And the only way to do this is to get rid of them, to be leaders in international nuclear disarmament.

Disarmament is inextricably intertwined with climate change, the environment, militarism, and health and human rights. The poor will suffer most from the effects of climate change, the amount of land globally available for food production will reduce, and mass migration and increased risk of conflict will result. If a state involved in such a conflict possessed nuclear weapons and a lack of its leaders' judgement and wisdom caused them to be used, the result would be total devastation.

In the same way that smoking was regarded as a normal part of life until doctors began to speak out about the risks and people's behaviour began to change, doctors and health professionals are speaking out about the risks of nuclear weapons. And, in the same way that the tobacco industry did not like what they had to say, the arms industry resists the evidence about the profit motive and the lack of regard for human health and wellbeing behind the arms industry.

Trident has been an obscene presence in the beautiful Firth of Clyde for too long. And for so long that people have generally stopped thinking about it: it has become the elephant, not in the room, but in the Clyde. The message from the Faslane demonstration was that we are going to ensure that people no longer ignore it.

Many of the health professionals spreading this message are members of Medact (<https://www.medact.org/>), an organisation working for a better, fairer,

safer world and campaigning to get rid of Trident. Medact's disarmament work is supported by the position of the British Medical Association and the World Medical Association, and it is the British affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (<https://www.ippnw.org/>), winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1985, and an affiliate of the International Campaign for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons (<https://www.icanw.org/>), this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner. Medact members believe that it is their professional responsibility to care, not just for individual patients, their families, and their community, but for the global community.

At the RCGP conference in October 2018, a session chaired by Dr David Blane, Clinical Academic Fellow at the University of Glasgow, discussed general practice communities and the connections between global health and local networks. To be actively engaged in global health you don't need to travel and work overseas: you can contribute from your base in this country. A member of the RCGP Junior International Committee described how, by joining it, she had 'found her tribe'. Many members of Medact and similar organisations feel that they belong to a family of like-minded people who see health in a wider context. At a time when so many GPs and junior doctors feel isolated and stressed, offering such support and connection is valuable and important.

On the evening before Faslane, a meeting in Glasgow of those going to the demo heard Pete Ritchie, Executive Director of Nourish Scotland (<http://www.nourishscotland.org/>), speak about food as an issue of human rights. The world has enough food to feed all its people. The fact that it is used as a profit-making commodity means that millions starve.

Putting people before profit is fundamental to health care and it is a message that the military industrial complex exemplified by Trident on the Clyde needs to hear.

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