

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMY OF MEDICAL ROYAL COLLEGES ON 12 JULY 2004

THE ACADEMY'S POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE (APEC)

Professor Douglas, Chairman of APEC, reported that both the Foundation Years Training Subcommittee and the Specialist Training Subcommittee were due to meet shortly.

Professor Douglas went on to indicate that a one-day seminar on Assessment Tools had been arranged on 10 September 2004 at the Royal College of Physicians of London and notification of this event would be circulated in the near future.

Mr McGowan, President of the Faculty of Accident & Emergency Medicine, reported that the clinical content for the F2 assessment programme for acute care was due to be finalised and it would be circulated to all members of the Academy via the secretariat.

FUTURE ROLE OF THE ACADEMY

Professor Black had agreed to convene a working party to look at the future role of the Academy. She had invited Professor Bill Dunlop, Professor Rod Griffiths, Mr Paul Hunter, Mr John Smith and Professor James Underwood to join the working party and indicated that she would produce a draft paper for the group to consider. This paper could then be considered at the September meeting of the Academy.

THE ACADEMY'S HEALTH INEQUALITIES FORUM (AHIF)

The Academy considered a 'statement of intent' that had been prepared by Mr Nick Astbury, Chairman of AHIF. The purpose of the statement was to begin to increase awareness of the widening inequalities in health in the UK and the necessity to reverse this trend. In the light of helpful discussions, this statement would be amended and circulated to all members of the Academy for approval.

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALISM

Professor Black reported that the Royal College of Physicians of London was setting up a working party on Medical Professionalism. Sir Donald Irvine's input on medical professionalism had informed this work. The working party would include membership from the British Medical Association, the General Medical Council and the King's Fund. Professor Black hoped that the Academy would join in this initiative and would be writing to individual Presidents in the next few days.

RETURN TO WORK AS A MEASURE OF SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME IN ANY MEDICAL INTERVENTION

The Academy considered the above report that had been prepared by Dr Bill Gunnyeon.

All members of the Academy believed the report highlighted an important aspect of patient care and that its successful implementation would require a change of culture within the medical profession.

It was agreed that Dr Gunnyeon should convene a short-life working group with representatives from a number of specialties, including general practice, occupational medicine, physicians and psychiatrists to take the initiative forward.

BRAIN STEM DEATH

Dr Peter Simpson reported that he had written to all members of the Academy regarding the project to revise the diagnosis of brain stem death guidelines to see if they wished to continue with their original nominee or if they wished to nominate a new representative.

He expected the group would need to meet about three times during the coming year in order to complete this initiative.

ASSISTED DYING FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL BILL

The Chairman reported that he had met Deborah Annets, Chief Executive Officer of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society, to discuss the above Bill.

A House of Lords Select Committee had been appointed to consider and report on the Bill and a call for written evidence by 3 September 2004 had gone out.

Ms Annets had provided two briefing papers, which listed the reasons why the Bill was important. These included the right of a terminally ill patient, who is suffering unbearably, to request pain relief and ask for assistance to die, within strict safeguards.

The Academy also considered a briefing note on the ethical issues that had been prepared for the Council of the Royal College of Physicians of London. This paper highlighted a number of considerations and indicated that ultimately this Bill would be a matter for society as a whole and not for the medical profession to decide upon.

The specific role of the College should be to identify those medical issues that would need to be addressed if the Bill were enacted. These included: diagnosis, training, implementation, audit and documentation. Members of the Academy were asked to take this document back to their Colleges and Faculties for consideration and it would be discussed again at the September meeting.

THE NHS CONFEDERATION AND THE JOINT CONSULTANTS COMMITTEE

The Chairman reported that the Academy had been invited to nominate three representatives to the above group. It was agreed that the Chairman and the two Vice Chairmen should be nominated.

LETTER FROM DR WILKIE, CHAIR OF THE ACADEMY'S PATIENT/LAY GROUP

The Chairman reported that he had received a letter from Dr Wilkie, who was unable to be present, indicating that the Academy would be holding a Seminar on 2 September 2004 that was open to all members of College and Faculty PLGs. A programme was due to be circulated and speakers included Sir Ian Kennedy from the Health Care Commission and Sir Donald Irvine.

DISCORDANT PRACTICE

The Academy received a note of a meeting between Professor James Underwood and the Healthcare Commission to discuss the risk to patients resulting from the practice of doctors whose work in the NHS and in the independent sector is clinically discordant. Professor Underwood indicated that he would continue discussions with the Healthcare Commission and report back to the Academy in due course.

APPRAISAL OF DOCTORS IN THE INDEPENDENT SECTOR

The Academy considered the report from Dr Ash, Chair of the above group, which was addressing appraisal for doctors who work exclusively in the independent sector. The

group would provide guidance for the Academy on how individual Colleges and Faculties might approach the issue of appraisal of such doctors.

THE HUMAN TISSUE BILL

Professor Underwood introduced the comments on the above Bill, which had been prepared by the Royal College of Pathologists. The Bill had now passed to the House of Lords, after amendment by the House of Commons. It was proposed that the document should be adopted by the Academy and members were asked to send any comments they might have direct to Professor Underwood.

MODERNISING MEDICAL CAREERS

The Academy received the draft Minutes of the meeting organised by the Joint Consultants Committee on MMC. The meeting welcomed PMETB's reported statement that the CCT would denote the same level of competence as the current CCST but felt that this did not adequately address the issue of what consultants of the future, produced via the MMC reforms, would be expected to do.

THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Professor Dunlop reported that at the end of the MMC meeting there was a brief discussion on the above.

A new Frontline Support Academy had been established to help NHS leaders with the new technology. This Academy would provide simulators that would reproduce realistic environments such as hospital wards and general practice surgeries. In this way clinicians would receive the appropriate education and training, since it was accepted that this was vital for the success of the project.

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