

Statement from Professor Carrie MacEwen Chair, Academy of Medical Royal Colleges

19 July 2017

I am delighted and honoured to have been elected as Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

I believe the Academy provides the route whereby all colleges and faculties – and therefore medicine as a whole – can speak with one voice for the entire profession regarding the challenges faced by college members and the NHS overall. One single voice, delivering one coherent message is a powerful tool. I would want that to be used to its full advantage. This voice should concentrate on issues about which it holds most influence and can make a difference by offering viable and pragmatic solutions to the current problems and pressures, of which we are all aware.

The Academy's role is to provide a wide base of experience and to use this, backed up by firm data about the activities and outcomes across the health system, to promote the highest standards of care recognising the influences and realities of social factors, resources and political decisions. By using combined membership and partner knowledge, the Academy is well placed to help promote sustainable health services, such as using resources sensibly in the successful Choosing Wisely Campaign.

Coming from Scotland I am very clear that whatever organisational differences there are in the health systems in the four countries of the UK, the underlying issues and principles are the same across the UK. I will want to work on a UK-wide basis to promote improvements in healthcare.

Priorities

The issues I see as a priority over the coming three years are:

– **Workforce**

The workload pressures on medical and other health care staff are intense. We know there is a high vacancy factor and that staff feel overworked and undervalued. All staff deserve adequate support and recognition so they are able to look after our patients. Retaining our existing staff using flexible approaches to employment as well as recruiting and training new staff must be a key priority for the NHS across the UK.

– **Resources and Value**

I believe the NHS needs more resources but also know that we must show that we are using our current resources as effectively and appropriately as possible. Clinicians have a key, and often neglected, role to play in reducing variation and promoting efficient practice. The Academy's Choosing Wisely programme, together with initiatives such as Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT), Realistic Medicine in Scotland and Prudent Healthcare in Wales all show that improving quality and protecting resources can, and should, go hand in hand.

– The digital agenda

The NHS is, belatedly, becoming aware of the enormous implications of the digital revolution and that it will impact on everything organisations and individual clinicians do. Clinicians must be fully engaged with these developments and ensure they really benefit patient care to their best potential. Information regarding activity and outcome data are key to the delivery of optimum services and future developments.

– Brexit

The implications of Brexit in healthcare are profound in terms of workforce supply, research funding and collaboration, public health, regulation of medicines, professional qualifications as well as reciprocal provision of health care for European and British citizens. The Academy and colleges must play a central role in these developments.

– Education and training

The core college business of training, education, assessment and maintaining quality and standards must remain the focus of the Academy, with the aim of ensuring they are updated and fit for delivering and developing modern health care in the UK. This means engaging with relevant bodies to promote opportunities for personal development, professionalism and job satisfaction for doctors of all grades in all specialties – less micro-management and more performance, fewer competences and more capabilities, less isolation and more team support.

Working together

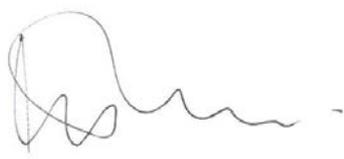
The Academy exists to represent and support its member organisations. We have started a process of looking at what our 'offer' to members should be going forward and how we can provide the best support and value to our members. As Chair of the Council I do want to ensure that members are fully involved in what we do and say.

Maintaining positive and constructive interactions with those who form policies and hold the purse strings is not always straightforward and differing views and priorities will emerge on occasions. That is understandable, but, it is imperative to maintain dialogue and working relationships based on clear objectives backed by sound evidence for what, I know, will be a shared agenda to improve care and services for patients.

Working together as a profession with other stakeholders and partners will stimulate different, but cohesive, approaches regarding options that involve more than just the medical profession and promoting working on a multi-disciplinary basis across the clinical professions is essential.

Finally, I want to pay a special tribute to my predecessor, Professor Dame Sue Bailey, for her work as Academy Chair. In what were not always easy times she always demonstrated wisdom, kindness and calm. Thank you, Sue.

I am looking forward to working with the excellent Academy Officers, Council Members, Trustees as well as the Academy staff and engaging positively with colleagues and partner organisations over the next three years.



Professor Carrie MacEwen,
Chair Academy of Medical Royal Colleges