

## Blogpost:

# 2018: The NHS at 70



2018 marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NHS - a year to celebrate one of the UK's national treasures. Surviving to 70 years is no longer a rarity - largely due to the success of the NHS - and growth of this section of the population progressively increases and is predicted to continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

However, old age does not come alone and the NHS, across the UK, has not had an auspicious start to its big birthday

year due to winter pressures on an already stressed system. Working in healthcare to-day is difficult due to increasing demand, staff vacancies in all groups at all levels, lack of continuity of care and team spirit and insistence on keeping patients moving through the system at a harrying pace.

At a time of celebration, it is important to look back to see how far we have come - from the days of polio and measles, Nightingale wards and lock up GP surgeries in an era where knowing the structure of DNA and performing organ transplants were pipe dreams: to the comprehensive, vaccinated, screened, personalised care of today that keeps people alive and well to a ripe old age. Change has been constant and continues to be driven, but more is needed urgently - as is the means to make that change in a timeframe to be meaningful.

Colleges, working individually or in partnership, are key to ensuring that changes are delivered with safe standards in place as new ways of working and delivering care are introduced. Training a medical workforce that is flexible and up to date and producing solid clinical and service guidance are essential for the future. Together Colleges can influence improved efficiency and provide patients with the information to influence their own care through initiatives and education.

We all recognise that with longevity comes morbidity commonly due to chronic and complex conditions. Combine this increased demand for healthcare with the expensive treatments and care packages that work so effectively - and the greatest threat to the NHS may be its undoubted success. This success needs to be nurtured and given a healthy injection of support.

This year, birthday congratulations also go to the Royal College of Physicians of London which is 500 years old, to the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, which is 30 and to the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health which is celebrating its coming of age at 21.

**Professor Carrie MacEwen, Chair,  
Academy of Medical Royal Colleges**