



RCoA: President's News

March 2016

THE ROYAL COLLEGE
OF ANAESTHETISTS



Can't Buy Me Love

(The Beatles, 1964)

As a specialty on the front line, we are all too aware of the difficulties facing NHS hospitals unable to admit new patients as beds remain full, leading to cancelled appointments and operations. Last week, ahead of the chancellor's eighth budget published on Wednesday, Dr Anna Batchelor, Dean of the Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine, and I [signed a letter](#) urging an increase in funding for social care. Joining twelve other medical leaders across specialties, we expressed our concerns that patients fit for discharge and waiting to leave hospital are in many cases unable to do so because social care support is unavailable. Unfortunately, whilst we welcome the introduction of the sugar tax as one means to address the obesity epidemic, this alone will not address the complex issues and consequent impact on health services demand, without education, better food labelling and advertising changes. Wednesday's announcements did little to assuage fears on public sector health cuts. The obvious omission in the Budget was the large deficit in health and social care funding. While NHS trusts in England are £2.3 billion in deficit and there is a £4.3bn black hole in social care budgets by 2020, Westminster has failed to provide any answers on how these shortfalls will be met. The recent call for a cross-party, independent commission on the future of health and social care in this country is surely the best way forward.

The continuing dispute between the government and BMA shows no sign of abating. Following the government's disappointing decision to impose the junior doctors' contract in England, thousands of doctors across the country took part in industrial action, offering emergency care only for 48-hours.

The fact that there have now been three strikes in as many months, coupled with the prospect of the government facing a judicial review, underlines the strength of feeling of doctors across the country.

We are a seven day specialty – anaesthetists will continue to deliver care for patients each hour of each day, just as we always have. Working nights and weekends is an inescapable fact for our trainees but low morale need not be.

We continue to support our trainees at the highest levels of government, and represent the specialty on issues more widely. We have emphasised that anaesthesia and critical care medicine competencies are not part of the generic skill set of doctors and so the potential for cross-cover of our scope of practice by colleagues from other specialties is not an option. With 68% of patients in secondary care interacting with anaesthetic services this issue is crucial to the maintenance of both elective and urgent/emergency care. I want to offer my absolute assurance that this College remains committed to supporting our trainees and representing the concerns of the wider specialty during this difficult and challenging period.



The pivotal role that our specialty plays in the delivery of safe patient care was emphasised by world-renowned patient safety expert Professor Don Berwick, who delivered the John Snow Oration at our recent Anniversary Meeting. Professor Berwick praised the specialty and hailed anaesthetists as 'pioneers in safety' highlighting our critical role in innovation and improvement within healthcare.

The improvement science theme was continued by Professor Carol Peden during The Macintosh Lecture. The presentation offered insight into the political and societal urgency to become more effective and efficient with healthcare resources, to understand better how we can make our systems safer and to translate learning from operations management, engineering and industry to healthcare.



High turnout for Advisory Board Elections

Voting recently closed in the elections to the Scottish and Northern Irish Advisory Boards. Scottish elections concluded with an [impressive 46.3% turnout](#) – one of the highest voting rates ever recorded for an RCoA election. I am pleased to announce that Dr Alastair Thomson has been elected to the Advisory Board for Scotland. I would like to extend my thanks to all three candidates for standing and congratulate Dr Thomson, who will work with the Board to ensure that issues of specific relevance to Scotland can be addressed at a local, national and UK-wide level.

I would like to thank Dr William Donaldson and Dr Killian McCourt for their nominations to the Advisory Board for Northern Ireland. As the College was inviting nominations for two vacancies on this occasion, Dr Donaldson and Dr McCourt have both been appointed to the Board.

Council and myself are working with both Boards on matters of direct relevance to each devolved nation including training, education, work force and quality improvement.



Focus on our Fellows and Members

As part of our commitment to improving the services we offer Fellows and Members, the College would like to hear your views. We will soon be sending you a survey to give you the opportunity to share your thoughts and experiences of College services and support. All feedback will be collected and anonymised by an independent research agency before being shared with the College to help us ensure that our services continually develop to meet your needs and expectations.

We will be sending you the survey via email at the beginning of April. Please do take the time to complete it and help us to improve the way we engage with and support you throughout your career.

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Clinical Excellence Awards 2016

I am pleased to announce that the National Clinical Excellence Awards for England and Wales 2016 is now open. Anaesthesia received an improved 25 new awards in a highly competitive process last year and we welcome applications for consideration of College support for 2016. As the number of new awards available will remain the same as last year, the College will only be able to support a limited number of applications so please take note of the [guidance issued by the College](#) as well as [the ACCEA](#) before submitting completed forms to accea@rcoa.ac.uk by 9am on 4 April.

Although the 2016 awards round is again expected to be a highly competitive process, the College remains committed to building on last year's gains and making the case for anaesthetists to be better recognised for their vital role in delivering high quality and innovative healthcare.



Breaking records

It has been a record-breaking month for ACSA, the College's anaesthetic services quality improvement programme, with three new departments gaining accreditation this month. Torbay & South Devon NHS Trust and St Helens & Knowsley NHS Trust are newly accredited, with Plymouth Hospital the first trust nationwide to achieve domain 5 – subspecialty accreditation in neuroanaesthesia. Congratulations to all three departments in achieving this accolade.

ACSA continues to go from strength to strength and with 65 hospitals now engaged in the process, I am heartened by the way the specialty has embraced our peer review programme and look forward to seeing the number of accredited departments continue to grow. More information about the ACSA process and accredited sites can be [found here](#).



Diabetes focus for NCEPOD 2017

I am delighted to announce that one of the National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death (NCEPOD) investigations selected for 2017, will be examination of the care and outcomes of the surgical patient with diabetes. The successful multidisciplinary submission, led by Consultant Anaesthetist Dr Nicholas Levy, is closely aligned with the College's perioperative medicine programme developing integrated patient pathways for the high-risk surgical patient. With more than three million people diagnosed with diabetes in the UK and at least 10-15% of patients undergoing surgery suffering with the condition, the findings from this investigation will inform NCEPOD to make national recommendations to improve the perioperative care of patients with this life-long condition.



Governance review

It is good practice for all organisations to review their governance arrangements from time to time. The College is planning a review that will consider all aspects of governance including its: Charter and Ordinances, Regulations, associated Faculties, Committee structures and implications for the devolved nations. We are inviting expressions of interest from Fellows and Members to contribute to the review. We would particularly like to hear from UK-based Fellows and Members who do not hold, or have not held in the past, any College appointed role (College/Faculty Tutor, Regional Adviser, Examiner, Council/Faculty Board member). Please note that we already have trainee representation. This is a significant review that will involve attending up to twelve meetings in London, over the course of a year. Travel and other reasonable expenses will be paid. If you would like to know more, please email presidentnews@rcoa.ac.uk by **Friday 1 April 2016**.



Ms Irene Dalton and Dr Liam Brennan

President's Commendations

As in previous years, individuals who have given exemplary service to the College and wider specialty were honoured with President's Commendations during the Anniversary Dinner. I was delighted to present this award to a number of outstanding individuals, including Ms Irene Dalton for her years of service across many College strands and her important work in reviewing the Patient Liaison Group, which was renamed the Lay Committee under her leadership.

I was also pleased to honour Dr Mike Nevin with a Commendation. Mike was co-opted to Council in 2010 and played an instrumental part in forming the now well-established National Clinical Director's Network. He worked tirelessly in subsequent years, ensuring that our specialty remains at the forefront of the training and emergence of a new generation of NHS Clinical Leaders.

Mrs Kate Rivett was also honoured with a Commendation for her contribution to the Patient Liaison Group between 2005 and 2010. Kate was the vice-chairman of the group and lay lead for patient information during this time, making significant contributions to patient information and safety.

I also presented Dr Matt Oliver with a Commendation. Matt was appointed Research Fellow for the National Emergency Laparotomy Audit (NELA) in 2012 and led on the data analysis that showed variation in standards of care of patients undergoing emergency bowel surgery. He presented on NELA at national and international conferences, and worked tirelessly to improve patient care.

Dr Mike Tremlett was presented with a President's Commendation for his service to the FRCA examinations. A Primary FRCA Examiner in 2004, Mike progressed to the Final exam in 2007 and soon

became deputy and then lead of the clinical exam sub-group in 2010 before becoming Chairman of the Final examination in 2013. He retired last year but, as a key member of the Examinations Review Group, was instrumental in promoting improvements to the Final examination, maintaining the exams' validity and reliability for many years to come.

And finally...



Summer Symposium

As we head toward Easter, I am reminded that the College's Summer Symposium is just around the corner. This June, the event will take place in Brighton and focus on improving patient outcomes in anaesthesia and perioperative medicine, with sessions on preoperative testing and treatment, organisational factors and the management of high risk patients.

Alongside the comprehensive [lecture programme](#), we are also running various optional workshops as well as an informal event at a beachside restaurant, which will give delegates a chance to network – I hope, in the summer sunshine! Further information on the event [can be found here](#).

As ever, you can also contact me if you have any other comments on the issues highlighted in this newsletter, or thoughts on any other matter can be sent via presidentnews@rcoa.ac.uk. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,
Liam

Liam Brennan
President