

## **RCPsych Annual General Meeting 23 June 2021**

Report of the Dean



### **INTRODUCTION**

It is almost five years since I took up office of Dean at the Royal College of Psychiatrists and as such this is my last report to AGM in this role. Over my tenure I have focussed on delivering my election commitments to enable the College to support all psychiatrists to fulfil their professional potential. Last year's AGM took place 4 months after the start of the national emergency in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was unthinkable what immense challenges we would all face personally and professionally over the next year. In many ways however, the last 12 months have been some of the most productive and professionally satisfying of my term of office. I have seen College values of courage, innovation, respect, collaboration, learning and excellence at the fore during this period. Collaboration has been the key to all of our success, and I want to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of college staff and of our members who give freely of their time to support the educational activities of the College.

### **ASSOCIATE DEANS**

In delivering my key objectives I have been wholeheartedly supported by my Associate Deans

Dr Nandini Chakraborty - Associate Dean for Equivalence

Dr Helen Bruce - Promoting recruitment into psychiatry

Dr Regi Alexander – Conferences and Advanced Learning

Dr John Russell – Associate Dean for the Curriculum.

Dr Israel Abedukan – Trainee Support

Dr Charlotte Wilson-Jones - Associate Dean for Undergraduate Psychiatry

Professor Vivienne Curtis – Associate Dean for Academic Psychiatry

### **UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHIATRY**

In order to raise the profile of Undergraduate Psychiatry and highlight its importance last year I created a new associate dean post for undergraduate curriculum and brought the committee under the secretariat of professional standards. The undergraduate forum is now a committee of Education and Training Committee. We have an effective University network throughout the UK with representation from all 38 of the UK medical schools. The committee, under the leadership of Charlotte Wilson Jones has promoted our Guidance for Medical

Schools and disseminated good practice through both the networks and through their very significant contribution to our RCPsych flagship conference #PsychMedEd which I have reformed during my tenure to include undergraduate and foundation education as well as postgraduate training.

## **RECRUITMENT**

Our award winning Choose Psychiatry campaign has gone from strength to strength and its positive trajectory over the last 4 years has continued to grow. Last year we achieved a 100% fill rate to core training for the first time ever. As a result of our success, we were able to argue for an expansion of training numbers and have secured an additional 120 core training posts in England for 2021. The Scottish Government has also committed to an expansion in Scotland. We are expecting an announcement regarding the final fill rates imminently. However, despite the challenge of additional posts to fill we are confident that we are likely to have maintained our strong recruitment position. I want to say thank you to everyone for working tirelessly on promoting the specialty and encouraging a new generation to #ChoosePsychiatry. I particularly wanted to thank Professor Damien Longson, who has led national recruitment and worked very closely with HEE and the college over many years. His exceptional contribution has been acknowledged through the award of a Presidents Medal, but I wanted to add my personal thanks for his outstanding professionalism, excellence and contribution to our specialty and our educational community.

As well as success for Core Recruitment, Higher Specialist Training is also starting to see significant improvement in fill rates and is benefitting from improvement in the supply to core training over the past 4 years. There is still a lot of work for us to do to get us to 100% fill rate for higher training, but we are starting to see green shoots of recovery. Although I will be demitting office as Dean today, I am delighted to have been appointed Presidential Lead for Recruitment and will be working closely with faculty chairs over the next 2 years to develop recruitment strategy with the aim of getting us to 100% fill across all our training programmes. When I started as Dean, many saw my vision for recruitment as unachievable. However, having proven that the impossible can be possible I continue to believe that workforce is the single biggest challenge facing us as a profession. Our patients deserve access to well-trained and skilled substantive consultants. Those of us who work in frontline clinical services will be painfully aware of the challenges in making this a reality. However, focussing on unmet patients' need is a powerful motivator which focusses minds and ,as we have proven, drives palpable and meaningful change.

## **CURRICULUM**

Extensive work has continued on developing new curricula. I am grateful to John Russell, Associate Dean for leading on this work and to our Specialty Advisory Committees for all their thoughtful and meticulous work to get this right. John has worked closely with college staff and the GMC to develop modern, vibrant curriculum to train consultants centred on patient need. The timescale for implementation for the new curricula was pushed back via the GMC due to the pandemic. The new planned date for implementation is August 2022. Work is due

to start over the summer on the next phase of the project in planning for its launch next year.

## EXAMS

As I reported last year, the timescales for digitising the written papers for the MRCPsych exam were brought forward out of necessity due to the pandemic. Digitising our written papers was part of our 5-year strategy and I was keen as Dean not to be the last medical royal college handing out pencils and paper to our candidates. I was determined throughout, that no trainees' career progression was held up due to the pandemic. Ensuring that the MRCPsych continues to uphold important standards for patient care was also an important guiding principle. As a result, the College has worked tirelessly to deliver not only digitised written papers which can be sat remotely but also developed a remote and digitised clinical exam. The successful delivery of the exams project has been described as the biggest achievement ever of the college. I want to thank our Chief Examiner, Ian Hall, who led these developments at pace along with College staff whose work schedule was at times gruelling. I am also very grateful to the Board of Trustees, Fellow Officers and Senior Management Team who supported the concept and agreed the significant financial investment to enable this to happen. We have worked closely with the GMC and other educational stakeholders as well as the Psychiatric Trainees Committee under the leadership of Ross Runciman and Luke Baker to ensure smooth delivery. Delivery of exams will remain digital for the immediate future. Extensive work is underway to consider options for future delivery of the CASC exam beyond the pandemic and will involve reviewing the entire assessment structure throughout training as part of the curriculum review.

## TRAINING COURSES AND EVENTS

With all face-to-face activities being cancelled in March 2020, we have had to quickly digitise our programme of events and training. Under the leadership of Regi Alexander, we launched an ambitious programme of high-quality digital events, including Section 12 and Approved Clinician courses and our first ever virtual international congress. These events have attracted over 70,000 delegates so far and have enabled our members and psychiatrists around the world to continue learning and developing professionally during the pandemic.

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

In addition to the above, we have built on our Fellow schemes by continuing to deliver our well-regarded leadership and management scheme, supported our Psych Stars scheme which has continued to provide enrichment activities for medical students, continued to host the Medical Training Initiative Scheme despite challenges for international travel, continued Foundation Fellowships, supported PsychSocs in every medical school in the UK including delivering the first ever virtual PsychSoc conference, continued embedding work of the Gatsby Wellcome Neuroscience project, published guidance on involving patients in training and delivered virtual careers events. We have processed applications for CCT and CESR and as a result recommended approx. 120 doctors to be added to the Specialist Register

It has been an extraordinary privilege to serve as your Dean over the past 5 years. I am very grateful to the support and leadership of Dr Adrian James in his role as President over the past 12 months and his wholehearted support of educational leadership based on values of equality and equity. I also wanted to acknowledge the support and encouragement of his predecessors Professor Wendy Burn and Professor Sir Simon Wessely during my term of office as well as the outstanding leadership of Paul Rees CEO.

I wish my successor Professor Subodh Dave all the very best for his tenure as Dean. I am confident that you will support him as much as you have supported me, and that together, the Royal College of Psychiatrists will continue to achieve great things.

Dr Kate Lovett

Dean

June 2021