

RCPsych Annual General Meeting 20 June 2022

Report of the President



I am honored to have continued in the post of President in 2021/22, a year that we reached 20,000 members, which is an incredible milestone. I feel privileged to represent so many of you and it is exciting that we continue to grow as a College, in the UK and abroad.

As a College, our mission is to secure the best outcomes for people with mental illness, learning difficulties and developmental disorders by promoting excellent mental health services, training outstanding psychiatrists, promoting quality and research, setting standards and being the voice of psychiatry. To do this we support our members to give their best. All our activities over this last year and beyond have been based around this – we've trained the best, provided a robust examination and delivered education, support and training for life. We have continued to bring psychiatrists together to share best practice, and work with those with lived experience to ensure we always deliver for our patients.

As we emerge from the pandemic, many of us still face real challenges. We know that there will be a long recovery and that waiting lists within our mental health services are at record levels. We have also seen the heartbreaking events in Afghanistan and the conflict in Ukraine unfold. We are also deeply saddened by the unfolding situation in Sri Lanka. The College continues to provide support where it can, and I would like to express my deepest sympathies to all those facing humanitarian crises around the world.

Whatever the future holds, I believe the College will adapt well to its challenges. We are letting the values we launched in 2018 - Courage, Innovation, Respect, Collaboration, Learning and Excellence (C.I.R.C.L.E.) – guide us towards a new and exciting future for the College. I am pleased that we have now reopened Prescott Street after its refurbishment and have welcomed staff and members back inside our doors. Now, we are operating a blended model for delivering ceremonies and events which allows us to be flexible and respond to changing times.

I am also pleased that the remodeling of the delivery of the clinical exams for remote delivery has been so successful. Thanks to the fantastic work of College staff and members, so far 2186 candidates have successfully completed their Clinical Assessment of Skills and Competencies exam remotely, and despite initial concerns about internet connections dropping out we have achieved a 99% successful completion rate for the remote clinical exams.

An expert working group has been established to strategically review our summative and formative assessments. The aim of this review is to improve patient care, maintain the highest professional standards and support psychiatrists to achieve their

professional potential. The group will issue recommendations for the Council and Board of Trustees approval early next year.

We continue to play a key role in setting standards and working with others to drive up the quality of the mental health care that patients receive.

My big focus for the last year has been ensuring that the government does not neglect the mental health recovery following the coronavirus pandemic. Record numbers of people are seeking help from mental health services that are over-stretched and under-resourced. I have continued to campaign for a fully funded mental health recovery plan to ensure that everyone with a mental illness can get the help they need when they need it.

I have continued to meet regularly with the Chief Medical Officer for England, the Minister for Mental Health as well as the National Medical Director at NHS England, and I know colleagues in our devolved nations meet with their equivalents.

During this year's Queen's speech, it was announced that the government will bring forward long-awaited legislation on the Mental Health Act, covering England and Wales. The College welcomes the reforms which are designed to reduce the number of people detained under current laws, tackling the disproportionate detention of people from Black and minority ethnic communities. The changes also propose that neither autism nor learning disabilities are a ground for detention under the Act. The College will continue to work to ensure the reforms are successfully implemented, which will rely on the Act being accompanied by a robust workforce plan, with investment to deliver it.

Alongside this, we continue to make progress on my four presidential priorities.

My first is equity between mental and physical health, or parity of esteem. As part of this we are working on the College response to the cross-government mental health and wellbeing plan. This plan sets out a vision for mental health for 2025-2035.

Alongside this we have been collaborating with NHS England on their Long Term Plan refresh which will have a focus on mental health and particularly issues facing young people.

In the UK, we maintained a very high level of national media coverage and frequent appearances on television and radio by our spokespeople ensuring that our key messages of the mental health impact of the pandemic were highlighted.

On my second priority, championing equality, diversity and inclusion, I am pleased that we have had a successful first year of the College's Equality Action Plan, which includes 29 clear actions that will help us achieve traction and momentum.

We launched the Advancing Mental Health Equality (AMHE) Collaborative aimed at supporting mental health care providers to reduce mental health inequalities in their local areas. We have collated demographic data, including protected characteristics of members and staff to identify inequality and actions. Furthermore, I continue to

actively contribute to and support the work of the NHS Race and Health Observatory. The Equality Action Plan is helping us to ensure the College becomes a proactive anti-discrimination organisation in perpetuity.

Thirdly, I want to ensure that our workforce are supported. We continue to provide a wide range of support for College members, from when they first join the College to after they retire.

We further boosted the popularity of psychiatry with another successful Choose Psychiatry campaign, with 100% of psychiatrist core training places in the UK filled.

We were able to help secure some really positive amendments to the Health and Care Act including emphasising parity of esteem for mental health through the commitment to greater representation of mental health interests on Integrated Care Boards (ICBs). Furthermore, the Act now stipulates that NHS and ICBs have to be clear about how much is being spent on mental health, and the proportion of total spending it represents. Nevertheless, despite a strong campaign by the Royal College of Psychiatrists and over 100 other organisations, the Bill received Royal Assent on 27 April 2022 without a vital amendment on workforce planning. We will continue to campaign for a long-term and evidence-based approach to plan for the needs of the health and care workforce.

My final priority is sustainability; I want to ensure that sustainability is at the heart of everything we do. I was proud that the College was awarded observer status at the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow. In November, a delegation from the College, including myself, attended. We hosted a special event alongside other Medical Royal Colleges and reported back to highlight the important connections between climate change and mental health.

Crucially, we have also made several pledges as a College so that we can play our part in tackling the crisis. We'll be making energy improvements, encouraging staff to be more sustainable and aiming to reduce our travel emissions by 20% in 2022. I look forward to building on our existing work to make the College more sustainable.

Across the four nations of the UK, we have had real influence. In Scotland, we continue to play a key role in the Scottish review of Mental Health legislation, with members instrumental in our response. In Wales, we are to be a key partner in Health Education and Improvement Wales' first Mental Health Workforce Plan. In Northern Ireland, the College had vital strategic influence on each of the parties' manifestos for the Assembly Elections 2022.

Our International Division has played a really vital role in our response to crises around the world, including Ukraine. Furthermore, in May, the Middle East Division, in collaboration with the perinatal faculty, co-hosted a World Maternal Mental Health Day event at Sidra hospital in Doha. We have also now launched the fantastic International Newsletter, tailored to meet the needs of our members outside the UK.

I want to thank our new officers, Dean, Professor Subodh Dave and our Treasurer, Professor John Crichton. It is great to see them shaping their terms and already have success with their priorities. I also want to thank Registrar, Trudi Seneviratne who has had another excellent year, leading on College policy, public education, revalidation, and membership engagement.

I want to thank all my Presidential Leads for their dedication to their roles this year. Many of the College's biggest achievements could not have happened without their support.

In a fantastic reflection of all his hard work, our Chief Executive Paul Rees was honoured with an MBE for his services to mental health and equality, diversity, and inclusion during the New Year Honours. I want to thank Paul for his continued impressive work.

I am pleased that this year the College has continued to strive to improve patient outcomes, innovated, improved our members' sense of belonging, begun to address inequalities, improved the College's sustainability, grown our membership, continued to have robust governance and worked towards becoming a truly global college.

Finally, thank you to all our members for your dedication to our patients in a year full of change, challenge and new beginnings.

Dr Adrian James, President