

RCPsych Annual General Meeting 23 July 2021

Report of the President



I am absolutely delighted to have taken up the post of President this last year, and feel honoured to represent our 19,200 members, 18% of which are based outside of the UK.

Many of us have faced adversities this year and my thoughts continue to be with all of those who have sadly lost loved ones to the pandemic.

I believe the College adapted well to the challenges of this difficult period as the values we launched in 2018 - Courage, Innovation, Respect, Collaboration, Learning and Excellence (C.I.R.C.L.E.) – acted as a guide to inform our actions. We moved many of our activities online, including International Congress. We were also able to roll out of the biggest digital exam run by any UK medical royal college.

Our staff are still predominantly home working and we hope to make a more widescale return to the office in the Autumn.

As the pandemic has progressed, we have worked to ensure that mental health teams continue to be supported with up to date guidance on how to handle COVID-19. We are also providing continued support to those abroad through various initiatives with sister organisations. We have provided extensive webinars and videos that support members with some of the challenges they have faced this last year.

I continue to meet regularly with the Chief Medical Officer for England, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care as well as the National Medical Director at NHS England, and I know colleagues in our devolved nations meet with their equivalents.

Since the announcement of the White paper on Mental Health Act reform, covering England and Wales, the College worked to consult across the membership and engage with patients and carers to produce a submission to this consultation. As a College, we'll continue to work with the Department for Health and Social Care to make sure any new Bill is produced in a way that will allow patients to receive the best possible care and is supported by sufficient funding.

Meanwhile, we have been making some progress on my four presidential priorities.

My first is equity between mental and physical health, or parity of esteem. We haven't yet been able to produce a grand plan for parity. Even so, we have successfully kept mental health part of the national picture.

In the UK, we maintained a very high level of national media coverage and frequent appearances on television and radio by our spokespeople. We were able to successfully highlight the mental health impact of the pandemic.

On my second, championing equality and diversity, I am pleased that in January we published the College's Equality Action Plan. These 29 clear actions will help us achieve traction and momentum. They will help us deliver equality for all our staff; and equality of opportunity for our members – ensuring all doctors and students, of all backgrounds, are encouraged and supported. They will also help us develop services that deliver equality of access, outcome and experience for patients. This plan is the first step to the College becoming a proactive anti-discrimination organisation in perpetuity.

Thirdly, I want to ensure that 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. This has been even more important due to the adverse effects of the pandemic on all healthcare staff's wellbeing.

We will be launching our Enjoying Work Collaborative this Summer which provides opportunities for health care teams across the UK to gain more enjoyment from the vital work they're doing.

We have continued to boost the popularity of psychiatry and for the first time on record, 100% of psychiatrist core training places in the UK were filled. We are also pleased that 120 core psychiatry training posts have been announced for England, along with 5 in Scotland.

Lastly, I want to ensure that sustainability is at the heart of everything we do. In May we launched our position statement declaring a climate and ecological emergency that considers the threat that climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss poses to mental health. We've made recommendations to the NHS, medical education, academic and research organisations, as well as the UK government. Importantly, we have also made several pledges as a College so that we can play our part in tackling the crisis.

I want to thank our outgoing officers. Our outgoing Dean Dr Kate Lovett has been the true pioneer of the Choose Psychiatry Campaign and I am pleased she is due to take up the role of Presidential Lead for Recruitment. Our outgoing Treasurer Dr Jan Falkowski has helped steady the financial ship through one of the College's most difficult periods.

I am looking forward to working with our new Dean, Professor Subodh Dave and our new Treasurer Professor John Crichton.

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

I am very pleased that our Chief Executive Paul Rees won the 'memcom' UK membership sector Louis Armstrong CEO Leadership Award. Paul has provided inspirational leadership to our amazing staff team and helped to modernise and transform the College.

Finally, thank you to all our members for your dedication to our patients in this most challenging of years.

Dr Adrian James, President