

Chair's report 2022

The past year has gone exceptionally fast at the same time as feeling like we have aged much more than the 12 months that have passed. The ongoing struggle with the pandemic has taken its toll on so many outstanding colleagues. It was the year that the clapping was exchanged for criticism and the inevitable consequences of lockdowns and reduced capacity has been fully exposed, frustrating patients and clinicians alike.

However, we must look back on this historic period with a sense of pride for all that has been achieved by the profession when faced with such adversity. General Practice in Lothian played a vital role in delivering the first tranche of vaccination to those that benefited the most from it. Undoubtedly, this mammoth effort saved thousands of lives across our communities.

We remained open throughout the whole time, offering 100s of thousands of in-person appointments to those that needed them. We have embraced new models of working and will surely keep many of these developments in our future workings, not just the comfy scrubs!

It has also been the year where we have looked to relaunch the 2018 contract. The Office has been working exceptionally hard for all those we represent, to deliver the many promises made. There is much yet to do, with acknowledgement that the day of realisation on the 1st April 2022 is a time when few of the promises will be fulfilled. However, there has been progress. Vaccines will almost be fully devolved from General Practice and we have welcomed many new members to our workforce across pharmacotherapy, CTACS, and allied health care professionals.

It is not enough to release the time for GPs, as the expert medical generalists in the community, to realise our true potential but I remain optimistic that this can be achieved. With ongoing collaboration and direct investment into General Practice we can deliver.

A highlight of the year was the move toward direct investment, with our negotiations with NHS Lothian producing the winter pressure LES, closely followed by a similar support package from Scottish Government. This was enabled by being open and honest about the pressures we face, sharing data and gaining trust. General Practice is the bedrock of the NHS and I truly believe that this type of direct support helped many practices, and the wider system, survive the past winter.

So to the year ahead. The challenges are plentiful. We are losing a significant proportion of our workforce to retirement. Many of these people postponed their plans to assist the pandemic response and some have chosen to go a bit earlier, exhausted by their exceptional efforts. To all the outstanding colleagues leaving the profession in the near future, we are extremely grateful for all you have given to the profession, your community and above all your patients. Thank you.

For those of us remaining, the ongoing frustrations with backlog and unprecedented levels of demand can, at times, feel overwhelming. We cannot work harder than we are. However, there is some hope in that we can work smarter. There are opportunities abound to adapt older models of care, embrace new technology that makes the patient journey easier and the clinical management more efficient.

We must also be better at promoting the good that we do. It can be easy to not do so when we are working flat out but creating space for reflection and celebration of the good we achieve has to be part of a more sustainable model. Within the pandemic we have seen how coming closer together has offered support and reassurance to each other. I hope we maintain our strength in togetherness as we move forward with the structural changes and challenges we will face.

I finish by thanking all those that work in General Practice across Lothian. All doctors, all nurses and all administrative and support staff have served their communities with the utmost professionalism and altruism. It is a true privilege to represent you all, thank you for all you have done and continue to do.

Dr. Iain Morrison

Chair, Lothian Local Medical Committee

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