

LMC AGM REPORT 2023-2024

Good evening everyone.

Listening to our Chairs report has given us all opportunity to reflect on how far General Practice has come in the past 12 months, and even more so what a year Lothian LMC has had. And it has not all been easy. In fact far from it, with perhaps some of us arguing that the past year has been one of the biggest onslaughts to the integrity of general practice our generation has seen. But I look around this virtual room and feel a genuine pride to be defending our branch of practice with the likes of all that sit in here, shoulder to shoulder (or screen to screen I should say). We are a group of compassionate, motivated and hard-working individuals that work tremendously hard to lobby and protect our unique and special service and I am truly humbled by the dedication and gracious grit so many of you contribute to this worthwhile cause.

However, there are some that are no longer sitting here with us, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their efforts this past year. The LMC have had to say goodbye to Dr Cathy Smith and Dr Clem Jones both as North West Edinburgh representatives; Dr Fiona Ford as GP retainer representative and Dr Elena Delvescovo as one of our LASGP representatives. We thank them for their engagement, dedication and motivation to represent the profession and their areas of practice.

With losses we have however had some gains and what significant, instrumental and somewhat vocal (in a good way) gains these have already proven to be, with thoughts challenged and active representation already demonstrated! Welcome to Dr Debbie Strachan as East Lothian representative, Dr Michelle Downer as North West Edinburgh Representative, Dr Polly Dunne as GP retainer representative and Dr Douglas McGown as West Lothian HSCP Clinical Director. We are delighted to have fresh perspectives and such ardent representation.

Our voice has also been well heard nationally with brilliant representation both at UK and Scottish LMC conferences. I was inspired by the innovative and passionate motions proposed by Lothian and to hear colleagues speak so eloquently to so many of them. We are a talented bunch and I always feel very proud to sit on the Lothian bench. Many of our motions were passed unanimously, demonstrating the support and respect we have from our neighbouring board areas as well.

We also continue to be well represented on SGPC, again with many fervent and well thought out arguments contributing to debate. The relationship of SGPC and Scottish Government remain a luke warm one, and it is disappointing to see, even on my two years of sitting on SGPC, that we are now onto our third health secretary already. It is easy to become disheartened by the seemingly pointless propositions such as the most recent lightbulb idea of government to fund pilot sites to demonstrate the efficacy of a contract which should have been already fulfilled some 3 years ago now; or to become disillusioned that regardless of many stark and bleak workforce surveys, the SG still refuse to increase the proportion of NHS funding coming to general practice in spite of their somewhat public facing mantra that we are the "bed rock of the NHS". This rock is beginning to have almost too many cracks to cement over. However, I can assure you that the vehement voices of Lothian have been heard loud and clear at committee and we will continue to endeavour to influence the BMA's thinking to the best of our ability. We are also incredibly lucky that that voice is held to even higher levels with the ever eloquent Dr Jenny English being voted in again to SGPC's executive committee.

Which leads me on to the LMC Office. I, and the other office bearers, are forever indebted to the organisation and patience of our business co-ordinator Nicola Smith. I would not get anywhere on time if it wasn't for her detailed planning and meticulous organisation, as well as her well considered responses she makes to the many queries that come into the LMC inbox, often answering so much better than any of us arguably could. She remains instrumental in gathering evidence as part of our General Practice Alert System (GPAS) which quantifies the workload and pressure within our system, which in turn is shared locally at board level and nationally to Scottish Government. Many other boards across the UK have now adopted this system, and this again proves to provide robust data and evidence of how the frontline is under fire. I cannot stress enough how pivotal such rich data is, particularly in this increasingly fiscal climate as we lobby for investment into primary care. Investment that we all know carries huge bang for its buck.

I would also like to thank my other office bearers. Dr Neil Macritchie, who is ever the voice of balanced reasoning, always backed up by some financial or contractual paper. What that man cannot find on his computer is not worth finding. I genuinely think he has worked for MI6 or a secret spy agency in some previous life as his font of knowledge never ceases to amaze me. And to our chair Dr Iain Morrison. What he continues to shoulder on behalf of primary care on a daily basis is truly both humbling and astounding. His knowledge on contractual fine print, especially these past few weeks on premises, is absolutely mind blowing and I learn something from him most days. Not only are both these colleagues absolute fireballs for general practice, but they are also compassionate and dependable human beings who support colleagues, including myself, in their own personal battles, as well as their professional ones. We at Lothian LMC are very lucky to have such committed and commendable leaders as they.

So to the year ahead. It is not promised to be easy, but as I have said before, we stand as part of an incredible committee of people all working tremendously hard to represent a profession that we are all to be immensely proud of. We are always acutely aware of what a responsibility that is. Please know that the office welcomes any practice or individual seeking advice or counsel and we will do what we can, where we can, to support.

And finally, in the past year I have trained to be a GP trainer, and have been humbled by the calibre of trainees and the hope and enthusiasm the next generation has for general practice. The fight we are all engaged in as committee members can at times feel tiring, long and fruitless. However, I know there is still genuine worth in our fight. We owe it to the hopeful next generation; our loyal patients; our hardworking staff; our inspiring colleagues and most importantly, ourselves.

Thank you

Dr Annie Lomas
Medical Director Lothian LMC
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