

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF LMCs 2014

**22 & 23 MAY 2014**

**LMC EXECUTIVE PRESENT:**      Mark Durling              Tim Moorhead              David Savage

It was a pleasure to have an easy journey to York and the York Barbican was an excellent conference venue.

The overall mood of the Conference was one of great concern about the future of general practice, the ongoing funding problems and the recruitment and retention crisis, all of which are having a significant impact on delivery of primary care. It is likely that these problems will deepen in the coming year.

## **SPEECHES**

Chaand Nagpaul delivered his first speech to Conference as General Practitioners Committee (GPC) Chair. It was an excellent speech which received a long standing ovation. A transcript of the speech is available at:

<http://bma.org.uk/working-for-change/negotiating-for-the-profession/bma-general-practitioners-committee/lmc-conference-2014/gpc-chair-speech>.

Chaand emphasised the traditional value of our model of general practice and deplored the continuing manipulation of our contract and the inadequacy of the funding streams, amongst other topics. He emphasised the true vocational nature of the profession and its willingness to accept rational change, but always focused on the delivery of care to patients.

## **KEY NOTE ADDRESS**

Chris Ham from the King's Fund acknowledged the financial challenges and the overall resource issues facing the NHS and primary care in particular. His solution seemed to be a furtherance of the federation argument. His vision is of clusters of practice groups as federations providing services and increasing cooperation and, indeed, potentially amalgamating to provide one of these larger models of care. There was some flavour of disagreement with this approach but, nevertheless, his delivery was illuminating and well-illustrated with a PowerPoint presentation.

## **SOAPBOX SESSIONS**

There were two sessions covering a wide variety of topics, but the recurrent themes were the difficulty in dealing with rising workload with dwindling resources. Amongst other important topics discussed was criticism of the implementation of the Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection regimes, with some notable and unsettling stories from constituents.

## **MOTIONS**

The Agenda covered a huge variety of topics over the two days. Of particular note was a controversial motion calling for the introduction of charges for certain services. There was a healthy lobby of protestors outside the Conference hall on the first day and a significant amount of media coverage. The motion was unanimously defeated, much to the relief of the majority of representatives, which emphasised the LMC view that healthcare should be free at the point of delivery.

We had a number of motions on the Agenda as follows:

*SHEFFIELD: That conference calls for a new contractual model to support GP premises development to underpin the development of primary care services.*

Unfortunately, David was not called to speak to this motion.

*SHEFFIELD: That conference believes QOF targets:*

- (i) drive practices to chase targets at the expense of clinical judgement and patients' best interests*
- (ii) will only have the effect of increasing exception reporting when sound clinical judgement is used and could therefore threaten practice income*
- (iii) are a cynical attempt to claw back practice investment, should be withdrawn and paid to practices in full.*

Tim Moorhead spoke to this motion, which was not carried.

*SHEFFIELD: That conference believes the GP contract is still unfit for purpose. It does not reward activity and does not enable patient services to develop in the changing NHS landscape. GPC should therefore open negotiations for a new GP contract.*

I spoke to support a composite motion by Kent, calling for a practice based tariff system to reflect activity. Our motion was broadly supported in the concept of reviewing and starting a negotiation process for a fit for purpose contract. However, despite a rousing Elvis impersonation by the proposer, providing some welcome light relief (we always enjoy a song at Conference), the motion was defeated. Similarly to last year, the GPC steered the vote quite heavily, which was regrettable given that on the first day there was a motion giving a clear indication that they should provide a more neutral and balanced stance.

## **SUMMARY**

The Conference is a good opportunity to meet colleagues, which is always informative and enjoyable. I must say that Conference this year felt rather heavy on reiteration of the many problems and challenges we face which is, I believe, a fair reflection. However, solutions and creative discussions around a way forward were notably lacking and I think this is unfortunate.

Conference did debate the future organisation and development of the Conference but, as far as I am aware, no firm proposal has been accepted.

In future years we will continue to invite and encourage other Committee members to attend Conference, as this generally gives a good overview of the landscape of general practice.

**DR M DURLING**

**Chair**