

FACULTY OF FORENSIC & LEGAL MEDICINE

of the Royal College of Physicians, London

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26 May 2009

Dear Madam/Sir

Together we can end violence against women and girls – a consultation paper

The Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Home Office and Department of Health's initiative on how we can combat violence against women and girls.

The Faculty was established in 2006 by the Royal College of Physicians of London and has been founded to achieve the following objectives:

- To promote for the public benefit the advancement of education and knowledge in the field of forensic and legal medicine.
- To develop and maintain for the public benefit the good practice of forensic and legal medicine by ensuring the highest professional standards of competence and ethical integrity.

The Faculty includes three different professional groups:

- Forensic physicians
- Medically qualified coroners
- Medico-legal advisers to the medical defence organisations

We now have a membership of 700 and this continues to steadily increase.

The Faculty is of the view that it is crucial that properly trained forensic physicians assess victims of violence (both sexual and domestic) in order to achieve best forensic evidence. In addition, high quality forensic medical evidence is required in Court. We are of the opinion that that the responsibility and funding forensic medical services should be transferred from the Home Office to the Department of Health and that the services are then commissioned by Primary Care Trusts.

We strongly support the development of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) and believe that regionally based centres of excellence should also be commissioned.

However, we are of the opinion that in order to deliver the change necessary to meet the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) agenda we must look at the bigger picture such that in addition:

- we also recognise that there is violence against men and boys;
- suspects are examined by trained forensic physicians to ensure they are fit for interview and that best forensic evidence is obtained ensuring that assailants are convicted and there are not miscarriages of justice;

The Faculty believes that these changes can best be facilitated by creating a specialty of forensic and legal medicine which will then allow us to develop a career structure leading to a consultant based multi disciplinary service. We would welcome the opportunity of being part of a Task Force to facilitate these changes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ian F Wall'.

**Dr Ian F Wall MB ChB(Hons) FFLM FRCGP DMJ DOccMed
President**