

FACULTY OF FORENSIC & LEGAL MEDICINE

of the Royal College of Physicians of London



Registrar's report to 2018 AGM

This is my last Registrar's report before handing over to Dr Dick Shepherd. I am deeply grateful for the support of my fellow Senior Officers and the Vice-Presidents, and in particular the office team: Charlene, Tessa and Jay, who are working above and beyond their current job descriptions. Since I took over as Registrar in 2015, the breadth of the Faculty's work has increased enormously, membership of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AoMRC), our application for specialist recognition, providing revalidation, and establishing a variety of new working groups being but part of the additional workload. We have contracted with the Royal College of Nursing (whose HR department has done similar work for the AoMRC) to review all job descriptions, and to advise whether we need to build additional capacity into our office team.

I would like to pay particular tribute to all involved in the planning of our Annual Conference and AGM, in particular Tessa Lewis, who has dealt with the inevitable last-minute changes to the programme, and all the other uncertainties that arise when planning a large conference, with remarkable aplomb.

The increased complexity of the FFLM's activities makes us vulnerable to the effect of the sudden loss of key personnel. In order to mitigate this, we have started a medium-term project to gain ISO 9001 accreditation. Essentially this enshrines all our processes in an understandable form which - in theory - can be followed by anybody who might take up responsibilities to run Faculty business. While valuable, this exercise takes up significant time; the new Registrar will review the programme and the Board will decide if we continue to devote office time to it.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), an EU regulation which is passing into UK law, is due to take effect on 25 May this year. Its main principles require organisations who hold information on people to inform them what this data consists of, to justify holding the information, a positive consent process to be in place, and a right on behalf of the data subject for information to be deleted. From the office point of view, this requires the establishment of a consent process to be offered to all our members, and a reconfiguration of our software to record the fact that consent has either been given or withheld. We have given preliminary notice to all members via the bulletin, but will be following this up with more detailed requests for members to indicate their willingness for us to hold data that we think it justifiable to hold, and how they wish to be contacted.

Some of our members who act as expert witnesses have asked that they can - in their statements for court - reference the FFLM as a source of good practice. A Code of Practice for this purpose is in the final stages of completion, and will be posted on our website as soon as it is available.

The AGM on 11 May will be invited to approve the changes to the Standing Orders agreed by the last Board meeting. These clarify the differences between our categories of membership, in particular between our Affiliate and Associate categories. Subject to AGM approval we will start recruiting Dento-Legal Advisers (DLAs) as members, with a two-year “window” to create a body of Foundation members to assist us in establishing examinations at Licentiate and Membership level. Finally, we hope the AGM will approve the setting up of a new Membership and Fellowship committee, which will adjudicate applications for all categories of membership on a quarterly basis.

An important new working group will start work in the summer - the New Care Models Group. This has arisen out of the work of the AoMRC, but will be a specific piece of work focusing on a multi-disciplinary approach to police custody healthcare.

Faculty membership has recovered slightly from a dip in the latter half of 2017, but stands at 700 - 53 down on the same time last year. It is worrying that, as a result of police custody healthcare providers not requiring FFLM qualifications for their doctors, nurses and paramedics, examination applications have fallen significantly. We must hope that a successful application for specialist status will reverse that trend, but this will need to be accompanied by a recognition that specialist practitioners should be the norm when providers are recruiting healthcare professionals. We continue to press for the transfer of police custody healthcare to the NHS.

The Bulletin continues to be sent out weekly, and our presence on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn has increased.

I conclude by welcoming my successor, Dick Shepherd, and wishing him an enjoyable term as Registrar.

Michael Wilks