

# FACULTY OF FORENSIC & LEGAL MEDICINE

## of the Royal College of Physicians of London



### **Registrar's report to 2020 AGM**

This report will cover the main components of what has been another extremely busy and successful year for the Faculty – but one not without its' ups and downs.

The declining financial position of the Faculty at the time of the last AGM meant that some difficult and very serious decisions had to be speedily taken. The decision to leave the AoMRC was taken with great reluctance and has been controversial. However the Board was swayed by two facts: the annual subscription to the AoMRC was due to increase by over 30% and that this subscription is not related to the size of the membership of a College or Faculty and so the FFLM had to pay the same as the other Royal Colleges with much larger memberships which would have placed a disproportionate additional financial burden on our members.

The CPD diary had ceased to be of value to the membership and this was withdrawn at the end of the year.

I am extremely grateful for the huge amount of work that our President, Dr Margaret Stark has done in her first year of Office and for the help and support of all of the Senior Officers who as well as settling into their respective roles have also achieved so much.

I am also extremely grateful to our office team: Charlene Campbell, Tessa Lewis and Jay Barton-Costa throughout the year and also to Janine Wise, who has covered both Tessa and Charlene's maternity leave cover. I'm very pleased to say that both Tessa and Charlene are now back at work but that means, sadly, Janine will leave us at the end of this month.

The Faculty's networking within the forensic and legal medico-political communities continues on a very broad front and all that work coexists with the day-to-day management of our own office. As mentioned last year our lease at Alie Street expired and, after a brief search of potential office spaces, it was decided that we would become a "virtual office", a change precipitated not only by the end of our lease and but also by the urgent need to make significant cost savings.

As part of the Faculty's networking we have liaised with many other Colleges and Faculties, with the NHS (in its many forms and facets), with the Police and Government. Our progression towards specialist recognition is covered in the Academic Dean's report.

We have provided support to our Members in many areas both educational and personal including the link to a Suitable Person for revalidation and providing appraisers. We have managed all this without an increase in the annual subscription rates which, remain lower than many other Colleges and Faculties.

In March the Board agreed that we are going to be much firmer with those who fail to pay their subscriptions on time or fail to pay the correct amount. Reminders will be sent as usual

but after 3 months from renewal date access to the Bulletin, Web Site and Journal will be withdrawn and, most importantly, the privilege of using the Faculty postnominals will also be withdrawn until payment is made. Failure to pay for six months will mean that the individual will not only lose those privileges, but they will also have to pay a re-joining fee as well as the overdue subscription. We don't want to lose any of you - so please check your standing orders are for the correct amount!

We have maintained our contract with the HR Department at the Royal College of Nursing who has provided the Faculty with much needed support and assistance. Reviews of the job descriptions for all our staff and the role descriptions (published as appendices to the Standing Orders) of the Senior Officers and Vice Presidents have been completed.

As reported at last year's AGM, all of the Senior Officer posts had been filled and the new Senior Officers have all been working extremely hard to progress their respective roles. I am also fortunate to have Dr Alex Gorton as Assistant Registrar who has not only negotiated the new IT contracts and managed the migration of the Faculty's systems to the new provider, who have also created our new and greatly improved Faculty web site which will be available soon.

The AGM on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020 will be invited to approve the changes to the Standing Orders agreed by the last Faculty Board meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020. I mentioned last year it had become clear that IT technology has progressed (and postal prices have increased) to such an extent that it is essential that the Faculty's balloting process be redesigned for the 2020s. This was done and two ballots have been successfully run using the new systems. The necessary changes (repeated in several sections) of the Standing Orders are included this year for approval. In addition, and I have referred to this earlier in this report, changes in our management of the late payment of subscriptions are essential and these changes are reflected in the proposed new Standing Orders. Other amendments are minor cosmetic changes. All suggested amendments are highlighted in red.

In addition, the Faculty Board accepted a recommendation from Senior Officers and Vice Presidents that the Revalidation Committee be abolished as it was no longer necessary.

The streamlined Membership and Fellowship Committee continues under the chair of VP (Medical Coroners) Professor Fiona Wilcox. The fall in the Faculty membership continues to cause some concern to the Board, the main demographic change is the continuing loss of Affiliates, Members & Fellows in forensic medicine. As noted in years past the continued loss of, or simple lack of, posts in forensic medicine is given as the most common reason to relinquish membership of the Faculty.

This fall in membership is a very worrying trend which is under constant review and we are working hard to bring the need for better informed commissioning to the attention of the PCCs. On a brighter note I am pleased to report that the initial enthusiasm with which the Dento-Legal Advisers applied for Foundation Fellowship or Membership of the Faculty has continued and a Membership examination for MFFLM (DLA) is now in preparation.

The Bulletin has been sent out weekly, and our (soon to be improved) web site and our presence on Facebook and Twitter continue to have a beneficial effect. We hope that our change in publicity policy will also soon bear fruit.

Finally, I would like to pay particular tribute to all involved in the planning of this Annual Conference and AGM. It was with much regret that the annual conference had to be postponed but under the circumstances of Covid-19 this became inevitable.

It was with great sadness that I decided to resign from the post of Registrar for personal reasons this year however I would like to welcome my successor, Dr Helena Thornton, who has huge experience of the Faculty and who will be, I am sure, a great asset and assistance to Margaret and the other Senior Officers.

The next Faculty Conference and the 15<sup>th</sup> Faculty AGM will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Birmingham on 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

Richard Shepherd,  
Registrar  
May 2020