

Summary note of the meeting on 13 November 2019

Attendees

Clare Marx, GMC Chair (Forum Chair)
Judith Cross, BMA NI
Joanne Donnelly, GMC
Grainne Doran, RCGP NI
Laurence Dorman, RCGP NI (presenter)
Christine Eames, GMC
Keith Gardiner, NIMDTA
Lourda Geoghegan, RQIA
Cathy Jack, Belfast HSC Trust
Jane Kennedy, GMC
Neil Kennedy, QUB
Charlie Massey, GMC
Colin Melville, GMC
Moya McAleavy, Medical Advisor, Health and Social Care Board
Heather Monteverde, Long Term Conditions Alliance
Marion McCann, GMC (Forum secretariat)
Paul Reynolds, GMC

Observers

Peter Farnon
Jim Livingstone, Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (observer)
Helen McVicker, NI Social Care Council (observer)
Brendan Spooner
Gerry Walters, NMC (observer)

Welcome and Chair's introduction

- 1** The Chair welcomed attendees to the UK Advisory Forum (UKAF). She emphasised that the purpose of the meeting was to hear from members and provide time for discussion of the key issues arising in Northern Ireland.

Actions from the previous UKAF meeting

- 2** The Head of the Northern Ireland Office provided members with an update on actions from the last meeting on 13 March 2019. These included:
 - We have shared feedback with GMC communication colleagues that our stakeholders in NI have a different understanding of our regulatory role than individual registrants. This feedback has been taken into consideration as we develop our the NI engagement plan for the profession. We are planning roadshow events to discuss our wellbeing work with doctors in each HSC Trust region in the first six months of 2020. There will also be a high-level senior leaders' event in early 2020 which Clare Marx and Charlie Massey will attend to discuss our work to support the profession.
 - Forum members received an update on the engagement the GMC has undertaken around the new abortion legislation change in NI. It was noted that the GMC does not give clinical advice but wished to provide clarity and reassurance to doctors. Members were informed that the GMC is working in collaboration with the NMC as we develop our response to the UK government's consultation on the new legal framework for abortion in NI.
 - Since the last meeting the GMC has worked more collaboratively with the Patient and Client Council (PCC). This has included raising awareness of our patient feedback consultation through their patient network and working together, with organisations across the UK, to better signpost patients making complaints. Closer working with the PCC and greater patient engagement will be a key priority in 2020.

Chief Executive's Update

- 3** The GMC's Chief Executive reflected that the focus of the organisation's work has been on the *Supporting a Profession Under Pressure (SAPuP)* programme, noting that the three independent reviews were commissioned from different perspectives, but shared themes of compassionate leadership, fairness, and induction and support for doctors.
- 4** He noted that:
 - The final of the three reviews, chaired by Michael West and Dame Denise Coia, on the *Mental Health and Wellbeing of doctors and medical students (MHWB)* will be published on 15 November 2019.
 - The GMC has published its first *Workforce report* with notable points to highlight including: a significant increase in International Medical Graduates (IMGs), with numbers doubling in the last two years; and there are now more new IMG doctors on the register than UK medical school graduates. The proportion of IMGs on the

register also continues to increase; in NI BAME doctors make up eight percent of the medical register.

- Plans for the reform of medical education and training continue with the implementation of the Medical Licensing Assessment (MLA) on track for roll out from 2023 and early adopters taking forward work on Credentialing.
- Una Lane, Director of Registration and Revalidation, will lead the GMC's work on the regulation of Medical Associated Professionals. She had a series of positive early engagement meetings with NI stakeholders, including with the Department of Health (NI) and Ulster University, in September.
- The GMC are confident that our work over the past two years has put us in the best possible place to be able to mitigate the challenges that may arise if the UK leaves the EU without a deal. Closer working with Medical Council of Ireland continues to ensure patient safety is maintained.
- The GMC continues to call for legislative reform so that we can deliver responsible and accountable regulation.

Medical workforce, quality and safety

Agenda Item 1: Supporting a Profession Under Pressure: key themes

- 5 Paul Reynolds provided an update of the two reports published over the summer (*Gross Negligence Manslaughter and Culpable Homicide (GNM/CH)* and *Fair to Refer*) and noted the forthcoming report on *MHWB*. He highlighted key themes from each, acknowledged there was clear overlap in the recommendations of the three reports and noted the need to take a holistic view.
- 6 He noted:
 - **GNM review:** The GMC has acknowledged its relationship with the medical profession has been severely damaged in the aftermath of the Jack Adcock/ Dr Bawa-Garba case and has committed to implementing all of the recommendations of the GNM review.
 - **Fair to Refer:** The recommendations focused on improving support for doctors new to the UK, addressing systemic issues that may affect doctors' professional performance and ensuring engaged, positive and inclusive leadership across the four healthcare systems in the UK.
 - **MHWB:** The report identifies three key factors that doctors should experience in the workplace to protect their wellbeing. Known as the ABC of doctors' needs; Autonomy, Belonging and Competence.

- 7 Paul also noted the work that we are undertaking to address issues around workforce and workplace. Examples include mandatory attendance at GMC *Welcome to UK Practice* sessions for all doctors new to practice in NI, and the fully booked PLAB One exam taking place for the first time in NI in March 2020.

Overview of NI Medical Royal Colleges' Interface Principles

- 8 Laurence Dorman, RCGP NI, provided an overview of work coordinated by RCGP NI to collectively address communication and respect issues at primary and secondary care interfaces. Members noted that this is an excellent example of an existing project in NI that aligns with the SAPuP recommendations and themes highlighted earlier in the meeting.

Facilitated discussion about SAPuP recommendation

- 9 There followed a wide-ranging discussion, the themes raised included:
- **Reflective practice:** Members discussed the importance of regular reflective practice within multi-disciplinary teams. They noted that the main barriers to this include funding, access to meaningful data and freeing up staff time within existing rotas.
 - **Supportive environments and psychological safety:** Members highlighted initiatives in place to support staff within secondary care, including open events run in partnership with the BMA and Schwartz Rounds. It was noted that the individual duty of candour with criminal sanctions, recommended by the Independent Review of Hyponatremia-related Deaths, impacted doctors' sense of psychological safety within the workplace.
 - **Wellbeing** – A number of examples of wellness initiatives were given and availability of occupational health services within secondary care were noted. Members felt the lack of awareness of occupational health services is a challenge within primary care.
 - **Professionalism:** There was a discussion about the importance of individual responsibility to maintain professional standards and members commended RCGP for taking a lead role in developing the NI Royal College's communications standards.
 - **Foundation Year One (FY1) doctor experience** – Members noted the positive work undertaken by NIMDTA to improve the FY1 experience in NI.

Agenda item 2: Upstream regulation: preventing harm and supporting professionalism

Transition to the new Corporate Strategy

- 10** Colin Melville set out the approach we are taking in the development of our new Corporate Strategy, which will run from 2021 – 2025. He noted that a key area for consideration is what it will mean to be a professional regulator in five to ten years.
- 11** Members shared their views on the main challenges they believe the GMC face:
 - Divergence across the four countries; as healthcare systems and policy continue to diverge across the UK the GMC must adapt to provide a regulatory model which reflects this.
 - Maintaining an effective model of medical training; balancing the demands of doctors in training for increased flexibility with the delivery of medical training programmes within a challenging environment.
 - Regulatory reform, including the introduction of a GP specialist register.
 - Effective communication with the profession at all stages; the GMC was challenged to improve our engagement with medical students and to communicate positive messages to the profession to rebuild trust and increase confidence.
- 12** There followed a discussion about what kind of regulator the GMC should strive to be, suggestions included:
 - Aligning our standards and communications more closely with other professional and systems regulators.
 - Speaking out when system pressure impacts doctors' ability to maintain profession standards.
 - Measuring how quality improvement is achieved through professional regulation.

The Chair's closing comments

- 13** The Chair offered thanks to Laurence Dorman for his informative presentation.
- 14** The Chair commented on the significant medical workforce challenges across the UK and the importance of recognising the unique circumstances which are impacting on the workforce in NI.
- 15** Summarising the main themes discussed by the Forum, the Chair highlighted that members noted the need for professionalism in interactions between medical

colleagues, the importance of wellbeing and the need to respond to the diverging health policy agenda across the four countries of the UK.

- 16** In closing the Chair thanked members for the rich discussion, noting that she looked forward to further constructive engagement with the Forum during her tenure as Chair.
- 17** The next NI UKAF meeting will take place on 31 March 2020.