



EDITORIAL

The NHS 60th birthday celebrations are in full swing and the party is a happy family one. Estranged relatives smile for the cameras. The nation's weather and expectations are unusually good for Wimbledon fortnight. It couldn't have been stage managed better.

I thought that the last issue had comprehensively dealt with the anniversary, but putting together this issue I realised that there is a thread that joins them into a common theme relevant to the day.

Ethical issues surround seemingly simple therapeutic advances: back street abortions may have been consigned to history, but will they be replaced by front room ones? Surgery for a condition that doesn't kill or maim is accepted as a mainstream treatment, but its complications may cause disability. Some principles of clinical management have

persisted more or less unchanged since the first decade of the NHS – at some stage they need a radical review.

Staff dress code remains an issue. Short sleeves are in, ties are out. Will we see a return to bow ties for consultants, or suits restricted to staff who don't deal directly with patients? Do the patients have a view, or is there a more pressing principle?

Looking forward there are a few challenges. This week's NHS review 'High Quality Care for All' suggests no 'new targets'. The 80-year-old who currently travels by bus for 30 miles because the waiting list in her town has been closed because of a 'breach' and the review patient who cannot be seen because someone else's clock is ticking more loudly can take heart. I suspect our founding fathers would approve.

Andrew Severn
Editor

News . . . from the medical school

It is difficult to believe that it's only two years since we started – while there is still much to do, we have achieved so much.

One of the reasons for starting up medical education in Lancaster University was to encourage local applicants and last year, 20 out of the 50 students came from Cumbria and Lancashire. Over the last two years, we have attracted over five applicants for each place compared to the seven that established medical schools achieve. Thirty-one people have attended for PBL (problem based learning) training and we have 25 people actually facilitating PBL groups. Thanks to everyone's enthusiasm, we have 85 people offering 94 SSMS (special study modules) from the Acute Trust, Lancaster University, University of Cumbria and University of Central Lancashire.

The Morecambe Bay Hospitals, having already developed a tremendous reputation for clinical teaching in fourth and fifth year, have risen to the challenge of teaching second-year students – and the Education Office has coped with making clinical timetables work. Seven GP practices have taken on second-year students and other community placements have taken place in situations as varied as nursing homes, drug rehabilitation units and special children's schools.

The next big challenge facing us all is the third-year clinical placements including psychiatry, neurology, obstetrics and gynaecology, paediatrics and community. This is going to be something new for all of us which we are facing with a combination of optimism and apprehension. To allow this to

happen, 25 of the fourth-year Liverpool students who would have been at Morecambe Bay are going to clinical placements at Blackpool (this number increasing to 50 in year 2009/10). The exciting thing is that, once we have all successfully negotiated third year, there will be no new clinical attachments to experience.

The two years have brought staff changes. We were all very sorry that Mike Flanagan decided to give up his education role in order to go back to radiology. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to Mike for all he did in establishing medical education in Morecambe Bay. Mike has been replaced in undergraduate education by Jim Morris, and by Chris Till in the postgraduate role.

We also said 'good-bye' to Peter Benning, whose hard work in planning and developing the clinical placements so well – as well as being the main source of information about the Liverpool curriculum for so many people – laid the foundations that we are now benefiting from. Peter has gone to help colleagues in Blackpool face their challenges in medical education.

As I said – only two years gone – but so much achieved but with many challenges still facing us. Who knows what the next two years will bring!

Professor Anne Garden
Director of the Centre of Medical Education
Lancaster University