



Addressing the challenges being faced by our hospitals

July 2013

The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow has been following with interest the 'NHS Time for Action' campaign in the Herald over the past number of days and our President, Dr Frank Dunn, was pleased to contribute to the debate in a detailed interview with the leading journalist.

The NHS in both Scotland and England are faced with major challenges. Our aging population and the reduced number of inpatient beds for unscheduled care without question add to these challenges. There are also workforce issues within the medical profession, especially within the key areas of Emergency and Acute Medicine. In addition, there is a requirement to address all aspects of 24/7 care, both within the acute hospital setting and in the community.

The current target driven philosophy in the workplace is by no means unique to the NHS and some aspects of this have been of benefit to our patients. The horrendous waiting times for procedures such as bypass surgery that existed in the 1980s, for example, are now long gone and this is something to be applauded. However, there is a danger that a target driven philosophy is dominating the thinking of those running the NHS. This, coupled with the constant pressure for financial savings, is a toxic mix which is at the heart of many dysfunctional hospitals. The gravity of this situation is that it impacts adversely on the care of our patients with, in some cases, irrevocable consequences.

We are currently involved in a number of initiatives which address the challenges being faced by our hospitals, including working patterns for trainees and consultants and better integration of health and social care. These initiatives are being taken forward in partnership with the Scottish Academy (Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland) and directly with the Scottish Government. We are also in discussions with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the Federation of Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. The issues are complex and multi-factorial and there are no easy solutions.

In all of this we must not lose sight of the NHS workforce, the vast majority of whom are committed to compassionately care for patients. It is paramount that we give them the resources to deliver this care at all times and allow them the freedom to easily, and without fear, voice their concerns on issues that affect them and their patients.