

Beyond Covid - how can medicine keep pace with change?

Submitted by: Satellite PR

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Covid-19 pandemic has catapulted our society into the next paradigm. Who could have predicted the pace at which we'd adapt to the threat of a global pandemic? Within a month of the first Covid case in the UK, a nationwide lockdown was instated and for the most part, respected by the British people for the sake of protecting their fellow citizen. We saw hospitals created from conference centres and a vaccine researched and developed in record-breaking time. Out of necessity, the doctor has evolved to meet this brave new world.

Dr Charlie Bell, Medical Education Theme Group Leader for the Changing Face of Medicine project explains, "In many ways, medicine had bought into its own lie, that nothing can ever change. But Covid has helped us to understand that given the right circumstances, we're all capable of it. Let's examine what we've learned and how can we be more proactive in finding solutions to problems before they become desperate."

Placing ourselves into the future is not easy. We can see where we are at the moment, recognise our current difficulties and problems, indicate how things need to change, but visualising a picture twenty years hence is challenging. Yet it's just this task that the Changing Face of Medicine project has set itself. Bringing together key thinkers from across the healthcare sector, the project reflects on the future needs of our society and asks, are we prepared? And if not, how can we be?

Over the coming years, healthcare will need to adapt further to meet the needs of a changing society. This means navigating the introduction of AI and technology into the medical sector, whilst safeguarding the personal touch and continuity of care. It means caring for an ageing population suffering complex comorbidities. It also means unpicking outdated structures within the medical profession to facilitate greater diversity and uptake, allowing flexible working hours and addressing the poor work-life balance of healthcare professionals across the board.

Dr Lily Lamb, Leadership Theme Group Leader for the project, says "The COVID pandemic has highlighted mankind's flexibility and resourcefulness at a time of crisis, yet it has left a deep scar upon the healthcare profession. We need to start addressing issues like burn-out and poor mental health in order to make a career in medicine sustainable and an attractive option for future doctors. How can we make the NHS a better place to work and thereby, get the best out of everyone?"

The Changing Face of Medicine project aims to look to the role of the doctor in the future, with an overarching goal to influence long-term policy in the medical field. It will additionally seek to engage the public with findings to begin to generate constructive debate and further inform future health policy.

Professor Pali Hungin, Changing Face of Medicine Lead and former chair of the BMA, says, "As current events show, the future does not wait. It is essential that this dialogue is widened and strengthened so that clinicians and the public become aware of impending shifts which will so profoundly affect the healthcare of their own generation and of those to come. The establishment of a formal, resourced permanent Commission with this single-minded focus will ensure that this happens."

In September, we'll see the project move into its next steps hosting five webinars to elucidate on findings to date and explore new ways of working. Webinar topics will include: Clinicians' Wellbeing, Medical Education, Technology, Informatics and AI, The Future Doctor and the Future Patient – a true partnership? With panel guests including Professor Pali Hungin Professor, Professor Dinesh Bhugra, Dr Simon Eccles, Professor Sheona MacLeod and Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard.

Editor's Notes

The Changing Face of Medicine commission at the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges was set up two years ago. The project was funded by a grant from the Heart of England Community Foundation (Wesleyan Assurance) and the Medical and Dental Defense Union of Scotland (MDDUS). Its purpose is to catalyse a discussion about the future of medicine to help prepare for what is in the pipeline, hopefully providing an antidote to some of the present difficulties in the way medicine and health are delivered.

Professor Pali Hungin, Emeritus Professor in the Faculty of Medical Sciences at Newcastle University, was formerly the Dean of Medicine at Durham University. As the President of the BMA in 2017 he initiated work which led to the formation of the Changing Face of Medicine project, bringing together an international faculty of clinicians and lay people to consider the present strains in medicine and to invite projections about the future. As well as a GP in NE England for he worked in secondary care gastroenterology and much of his research is based on achieving earlier diagnoses and understanding barriers to good care.

The organisational team consists of Dr Richard Stevens (Project Convenor), Dr Simon Cooper (Project Convenor) and Ms Charlotte Phillips (Project Manager) The Changing Face of Medicine.

The webinar series consists of:

- Clinicians' Wellbeing - What does the future hold? (Tuesday 14th September, 13:00 – 14:00)

Moderated by: Professor Pali Hungin

Key Presenters: Dr Lily Lamb & Dr Richard Stevens

Panel: Professor Dinesh Bhugra, Professor Debbie Cohen & Dr Gregory Dollman

- Medical Education - What does the future hold? (Thursday 23rd September, 13:00 – 14:00)

Moderated by: Professor Michael Farthing

Key Presenters: Dr Charlie Bell & Dr Emma Peters

Panel: Dr Olamide Dada, Dr Sheona MacLeod & Professor John McLachlan

- Technology, Informatics and AI – What does the future hold? (Thursday 7th October, 13:00 – 14:00)

Moderated by: Dr Richard Stevens

Key Presenters: Dr Sarah Hallett & Dr Jeeves Wijesuriya

Panel: Dr Simon Eccles, Professor Michael Farthing & Dr Gursh Johal

- The Future Doctor and the Future Patient – a true partnership? (Wednesday 13th October, 13:00 – 14:00)

Moderated by: Dr Lily Lamb

Key Presenters: Dr Charlie Bell & Professor David Hunter

Panel: Dr Sunny Raju, Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard & Dr Patricia Wilkie

The Changing Face of Medicine (<http://www.thecfom.org.uk>)

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