THE PRIMARY CARE DERMATOLOGY SOCIETY (PCDS) was formed in 1993 by interested GPs to promote and encourage primary care dermatology. It followed on from participants who graduated with the diploma in practical dermatology in Cardiff as a forum where GPs could exchange views on primary care dermatology, develop skills through ongoing educational meetings and seminars as well as progress clinical research in this exciting and developing field of medicine.

From small beginnings, the Society has flourished and now has approximately 700 members in the UK and Ireland, with a very vibrant core of regional meetings throughout the year. Our Irish AGM has become established in the last weekend in February, and then the UK meeting is in mid-June. The committee members are all practising GPs.

Patchy education

Dermatology education has been very patchy and scarce at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels and, to a certain extent, the Society has filled this need for GPs whose quest for dermatological knowledge is reflected in the huge turnout we have for the AGM. At this meeting, the Society provides a range of high calibre speakers and interactive workshops on stimulating topics at a quality venue.

The Society would encourage as many young, and not so young, GPs to join and get involved in their dermatological education. Sixteen per cent of GP consultations deal with skin disorders, but GP training is very limited in this area and consequently, secondary referral is very high. This results in long waiting times for non-serious conditions which do not need to be managed by a consultant; warts, eczema and superficial basal cell carcinomas (BCCs) can be well managed in primary care.

Looking to the future, dermatological demand will increase significantly as a result of increasing incidence of common skin disorders such as eczema, BCC and carcinoma in situ (actinic keratoses and Bowen’s Disease).

There are a few postgraduate diploma courses available in the UK but the Irish diploma has faded from the scene. The most popular and highly recommended diploma in practical dermatology in Cardiff University is an online, year-long course equipping the GP with a sound understanding of skin disease. There is a dedicated online forum for practical discussion, and online assessments. The course starts in September and consists of three semesters – approximately 10 hours a week of study and two intensive weekend meet-