



PRESIDENT'S Report

In De Lampedusa's "The Leopard" Prince Don Fabrizio Salina says "Things must change for everything to stay the same." So it is in general practice, but change for the sake of it is not enough, we must change in ways to make the delivery of our services more accessible, relevant and beneficial to our patients. What is certain is that general practice as a specialty is currently changing more rapidly than ever before. Among the drivers of this change are the gender and generational composition of the specialty and attitudes to the contractual arrangements under which we work. We can be independent contractors in the GMS, work in private practice, be assistants, and undertake sessional or salaried work. In all of these roles we can maintain our personal and professional autonomy.

Political scientists use the term corporatism to describe a practice whereby a state, through the process of regulation of economic organisations, effectively co-opts their leadership or circumscribes their ability to challenge state authority by establishing the state as the source of their legitimacy.

Corporatism or neo-corporatism is often used popularly as a pejorative term in reference to perceived tendencies in politics for legislators and administrations to be influenced or dominated by the interests of business enterprises. The influence of other types of corporations, such as unions, is perceived to be relatively minor. In this view, government decisions are seen as being influenced strongly by which sorts of policies will lead to greater profits for favored companies.

In the UK there are growing concerns at the manner in which private companies are taking over general practice. In a single case in Derbyshire a well known local GP, Elizabeth Barrett, proposed setting up a small team to run the Langwith surgery. But when the tendering process was over, a very different kind of health service provider emerged victorious. United Health Europe (UHE) is a fledgling subsidiary of US based United Health Group, a giant multibillion dollar private US healthcare corporation and the biggest of its kind in the states. It trumped the local GP, winning top marks on most of the criteria set by the local PCT. Dr Barrett's bid did not even make the shortlist.

We in Ireland must be alert to the reality that if we are not careful we shall go from being independent contractors who can mould our practices to the benefits of both ourselves and our patients to being comparatively small cogs in a corporatist wheel. Our independence once forgone may never be reclaimed. Remember Baden Powell? "Be prepared for what?" someone once asked Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, "Why, for any old thing." said Baden-Powell. That aphorism surely applies to Irish general practitioners in the first decade of the 21st Century.

It has been a great privilege to serve the College and members as President during the past year. In representing you I met with many interesting individuals from across the health sector. I also witnessed at first hand the enormous work being undertaken by the College Chairman, Executive members and staff which gives me great confidence in the future of the College and indeed general practice.

During the past year, we experienced the sad loss of Dr Deirdre Murphy and Prof James McCormick, past Presidents of the College, and Dr Bill Mangan, former Treasurer. Ar dheis Dé n-anam.

Dr Declan Bonar, President



CHAIRMAN'S Report

This is my last report as Chairman of Council of College. During the course of the last year, there has been a sense that the profession has been marking time, especially as there has been no progress in contract negotiations. While of late there has been some increased communications with the Health Services Executive, I believe that there is significant work that needs be done for us to establish a relationship of some trust. It is however important to point out that considerable work has been done with HSE staff to increase the number of vocational training places, with the hope that the initial target of 150 training places per year can be achieved by July 2008. We are also actively involved with HSE on planning for Flu Pandemic and very much welcome the re-launch of GPIT. The College continues to develop, with new educational courses coming on stream, the core curriculum well advanced (to be launched at AGM), quality statements and the ever increasing research activities of the College going from strength to strength. The Annual Report 2007 outlines developments, resources and services in some detail (see www.icgp.ie) With this good news comes challenges, for example, within the coming months we will have to make decisions about our future accommodation needs.

HEALTH SERVICES EXECUTIVE

The HSE is now over 2 years in existence. It is fair to say, that we have had an increasing level of contact with PCCC staff and this has paid dividends in the development of GP training programs, the re-establishment of GPIT and the continued funding of Heartwatch and other on-going projects and collaboration on some new projects including Dexa scanning (GP access), the provision of services to young people, violence in the home etc. Communication is also developing with the HSE Medical Education, Training and Research Division which should result in more integrated approach and access to appropriate resources.

However, communication at the planning and implementation level and the fostering of a sense of real partnership has yet to happen. In the absence of dialogue, I have concerns about the potential direction in which general practice might be taken. On a number of occasions, we have received assurances that “GPs are central to the development of the Primary Care programme”. That said, a variety of documents from the HSE have made scant reference to general practice. I am of the view that a number of screening programs proposed by the Minister and the HSE could be rolled out without any general practice involvement, given the language used.

I am of the opinion that in this vacuum of information, trust is very hard to foster.

At another level, on a regular basis, the College is asked to nominate GPs to a whole plethora of bodies, at local, regional and sometimes national levels. It is important that GPs should be represented on these bodies. Why then are GPs the only members of these bodies that are out of pocket for attendance at meetings? GP involvement in this important work must be facilitated with the provision of adequate expenses including locum expenses.

The other representatives about the table are mostly HSE employees, who are going to get paid, not just their salary, but also their expenses. We are not looking for inflated amounts of money; many of our colleagues are truly altruistic about their time, but as small business owners cannot afford the serious hit to their cash flow. In spite of this, there are a number of our colleagues who have selflessly contributed to policy development in a whole variety of areas.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their very valuable contribution. However the HSE attitude to expenses must change, if we are to be effectively involved in these processes.

TRAINING

During the course of the last year, further work has been done to increase GP postgraduate training numbers. It is still our intention to achieve an initial target of 150 training places per annum and we now believe that this should be possible by July 2008. This is being achieved by the further extension of existing training schemes and the bringing into being of new schemes. It is important to record the fact that this is being achieved by dint of hard work on the part of College, the training schemes and the representatives of the HSE. There is recognition of rate limiting factors, which are now beginning to apply across the country. Getting a sufficient number of suitable hospital posts is proving troublesome, particularly in some disciplines. This is likely to become more difficult as the years go on, as the proposed change from a consultant led to a consultant provided health service occurs.

It is proposed that in the not too distant future, there will be perhaps 1,000 SHO posts in the country. All of these will be designated training posts. When we achieve our target of 150 trainees per year, this implies that at any given time there will be 300 SHO posts necessary for GP training and should be designated for training in general practice. The HSE is funding a national audit of NCHD posts with particular reference to designated training posts. This audit will include general practice and Dr Margaret O’Riordan is a member of the Steering Committee. The outcome of this work will be very helpful in planning and structuring training in the future.

For the immediate future, I am concerned that on occasions the only option being given us is that an extra SHO post be created, which given its stated policy of decreasing SHO numbers, the HSE are naturally reluctant to accede to. There are however possible solutions. There is no good educational reason, why SHO attachments should last 6 months. Indeed, one of the problems schemes have had over the years has been to try to achieve sufficient exposure to disciplines such as ENT, dermatology and more recently palliative care. Reducing the length of an attachment allows us to maximise the benefit of a specific SHO post, while at the same time giving trainees exposure to disciplines they previously did not have access to.



“It is still our intention to achieve an initial target of 150 training places per annum and we now believe that this should be possible by July 2008.”

To date, there has been an interim National Steering Committee, including HSE representation, which has worked to increase training numbers. It was the College who suggested to the Department of Health and Children that we should increase training numbers to 150 per annum. This is a best guess, but is likely to just about cover replacement for existing GPs. With an increasing population, lifestyle and work practice changes and ever increasing workload, the numbers of doctors requiring higher specialist training in general practice will increase. It was always our intention that the National Steering Committee be put on a more formal footing with clear terms of reference. GP manpower and other related issues will have to be addressed. When we do get to our target output of 150 trainees, what do we then do to increase training numbers further?

General practice is going to be much more involved in undergraduate teaching as well. By 2009, the undergraduate intake is going to be 725 students per year. Much of the extra numbers are going to be by way of graduate entry programs. The first two of these will be taking students this September. It has been indicated that much of the training will occur in general practice. This is an exciting development, but brings with it considerable resource and capacity implications. Later, there is going to be greatly increased number of intern posts (if that is what the post will still be called at that stage). We have piloted two GP intern posts – will this become the norm in future? On foot of Government decisions on the Fottrell and Buttimer reports an Inter Departmental Policy Steering Group was established. Subsequently a National Committee on Medical Education and Training was established, under the aegis of the inter-departmental Group, to oversee and contribute to the integrated implementation of Government policy. Dr Margaret O’Riordan, National Director GP Training, represents the College on the National Committee. We look forward to contributing to and facilitating these developments.

Training has been carried out by many general practitioners for decades. In the past, this was carried out totally on an altruistic basis, but with the introduction of a training practice allowance a decade ago. In the future, it has to be put on a more formal basis and due recognition should be made of the impact that training has on practices. I am confident however that we will continue to be up to the challenge of training our younger colleagues.

CHRONIC DISEASES

At the Winter Meeting, Dr Orlaith O’Reilly of the HSE told us of proposals to pilot a telephone support service for patients with chronic diseases, specifically diabetes, heart failure, coronary heart disease and COPD. The Budget in December included a reference to this proposed program and €2.5m has been allocated to it. At present tenders to run this program are being considered and if it all goes to schedule, it will be rolled out in the autumn. In this pilot program, it is proposed that a population of 20,000 patients will be enrolled.

Following the Winter Meeting, there has been contact between the College and the HSE on this program. The program does have potential merit. Through Heartwatch, we have shown that general practitioners are able to move patients to target for the medical management of chronic illness. What has been difficult is changing life

style behaviours, such as exercise, diet and smoking. It may be possible, with regular telephone contact that life coaching advice can be given and bring about desired changes. This pilot is to see if this is feasible and possible.

There are, however, a number of issues that need to be addressed. For example, how are patients to be recruited for this program? It has been suggested that patients be identified by attendance at outpatient clinics. This of course can be done, without any reference to general practitioners. However, to do this would be to identify only a limited subset of all patients with chronic illnesses. Other issues include what role these telecenters will have, in the event that a patient being supported deteriorates. Do the telecentre nurses advise the patient to contact their GP, or are they referred to the hospital, to an out-reach primary care service?

Though not part of my concerns about this project, I have some concerns about the management of chronic diseases in the future. One way or the other, the number of hospital consultants will increase significantly in the next few years; indeed it is possible in the next decade that there will be more consultants than GPs in Ireland. Though they will be expected to provide cover on a rota basis 24/7, particularly in the larger hospitals, their public hospital commitments will not fully occupy their time. I am concerned that we will see the emergence, as in the United States, of specialists who see themselves as primary care physicians. The core of my concern is that primary care and general practice are not the same. A primary care paediatrician or obstetrician does not provide the whole patient care that a general practitioner does.

Chronic disease management is challenging, but I believe general practice is the true place for the management of our patients with multi-system diseases. There could well be temptation to refer these patients to out-reach hospital clinics and we will be told that it is better managed by the specialists, but this is not true. We need to be careful about what we wish for, as there are plenty of others who will “relieve” us of our workload. I do not wish to return to being the carer of minor episodic illness.

I welcome the appointment of increased number of consultants. I believe that we should proactively engage with the specialty groups; endocrinologists, respiratory physicians, cardiologists etc and explore the interface between us, and look at issues of appropriate referral; pre-referral investigations and the transfer back to the community of those patients with chronic stable illness. A new GMS/PCRS/GP contract must recognise the role that general practitioners have in the management of chronic diseases and we should be appropriately resourced and remunerated for this service which we already provide.

We have not yet endorsed the telecentre chronic disease support service. We will however continue to monitor its development and liaise with the HSE on this.

OTHER MATTERS

I wish to report to the membership, that following issues raised at AGM some years ago, we have had a number of meetings with the Insurance Industry Federation. This is an umbrella body for insurance companies and is not in a position to force change on the industry. We have however conveyed to them concerns our members have, in particular the fact that we find ourselves being blamed by our patients, when they are loaded by an insurance company. This is in fact a business arrangement between the insurance company and their client; we are a third party to this arrangement. We have asked that we be taken out of this communication. We also raised with the IIF the fact that many of their clients were not aware of how much access the industry had to their health information. The industry has started to more fully inform their clients about what they are signing up for. I note with interest that this matter was raised by the media in the recent past.

In September, the College lease on Hospitality House will expire. When we took on the Heartwatch project, expanded the Women's Health Programme, the Research Programme and e-learning, there was need for extra accommodation. Given that the second floor in Lincoln Place is being used more or less continuously for education, we do have need for more space. It is also not desirable that the College staff be split over two buildings. Over the course of the last year, the Executive has been searching for alternative accommodation, but have not yet been successful. We will continue to look at all the options open to us.

The College's Education/Distance Learning Programme goes from strength to strength. During the course of the last year, we have negotiated a significant unrestricted educational grant. Amongst other things, this will allow us to run the first Summer School. A new departure for the College, this is an exciting development. Members can choose to spend between a half-day and four full days studying a variety of subjects and, because of the unrestricted grant, do so at reasonable cost. A further recent innovation is the Road-show for Clinical Updates. We will continue to develop new and innovative ways in which members will be able to maintain and develop their knowledge and skills.

At the launch of the Practice Nurse Publication

From (l-r): Ms Linda Latham (Advanced Nurse Practitioner Primary Care, Liberties Primary Care Centre, Dublin, member of the publication working group), Dr Michael Boland (PRC Director), Dr Declan Bonar (ICGP President), Ms Reneagh Bennett (Practice Nurse, Tullamore), Mr Dermot Folan (Assistant CEO ICGP) and Dr Eamonn Shanahan (Chairman ICGP)



A number of years ago, strategic decisions were made about the College's role and function in original research. A defined strategy was adopted and the post of Director of Research was established. Dr Claire Collins is the Director and with the outgoing Chairman of the Committee, Dr Walter Cullen, the College has recently been successful in attracting significant external grants for large, primary research in general practice in Ireland. The success in winning these research grants and indeed fostering other research projects is a testament to the foresightedness of adopting this strategy. We hope to build on these successes, so that the College has a central role to play in building up a substantial body of research, about and for Irish general practice.

At our winter Council meeting, Dr Lynda Sysson made a presentation on the Medical Councils proposals in regards to Multisource Feedback Questionnaires. The rationale behind these proposals should be familiar to most of you by now. There are undoubtedly teething problems to be overcome. It was the College's suggestion that the process be piloted and this is now rolling out. I am more than happy to be involved in this process. I am satisfied that the vast majority of doctors work to the highest standards. While we know this fact, and presume that others do also, we do not proactively prove it. In the changed environment in which we work, it is no longer sufficient to do our best; we must demonstrate this fact. By taking the high ground, we can better face challenges in the future. Participation in this process also has educational benefits and I would encourage all members to sign up and participate in this project.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the passing of Dr Deirdre Murphy and Prof James McCormick, former Presidents of the College, and Dr Bill Mangan, former Treasurer. All made significant contributions to our profession. Ar dheis De go raibh a n-anam.

THANKS

I would like to put on record my thanks to the members of the Executive and the Postgraduate Resource Centre. I have been privileged to see the breadth and depth of the work that the College carries out. The College staff work diligently and with unfailing good humour. We do not have a good College; we have a great College, which now rightly takes its equal place with the other senior Colleges.

Fionan has to take special mention, because his wise counsel helped me immeasurably. We will have to work hard to find his equal. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Farranfore Medical Centre for allowing me this opportunity to serve you. And I would like to thank Margaret, Bríd and Niall for being there.

Eamonn Shanahan, Chairman



HONORARY TREASURER'S Report

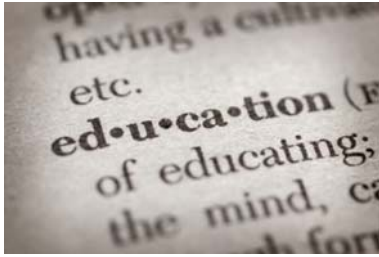
At the 2005 Annual General Meeting, an operating deficit of €100,000 was reported for the year ended December 2004. We had a positive turnaround with the accounts for the year 2005 showing an operating profit of €36,426. I am again pleased to report a continuing trend in this direction with the accounts for the year ended 31st December showing an operating profit of €54,645. This was achieved by increased income of €140,000 and relative control of expenditure increase of €121,000.

The main source of income for the College is the annual subscription which showed an increase of €50,000. However, the amount of outstanding subscriptions still remains very high at €330,000. At the autumn Council meeting (November 2005) it was agreed to introduce a late payment fee to be applied to all subscriptions remaining outstanding at the end of year 2006 and each year thereafter. This will now be implemented.

Another area which showed a significant increase in income related to College courses and conferences which showed an increase of €59,000 for the year. You will see from other sections of the Annual report (see www.icgp.ie) the wide and ever increasing range of courses and services being provided to members with a particular emphasis on distance learning and web-based activity.

In looking to the future there will be an ever increasing demand for new courses, services and information which must be resourced. A further issue is the need to come to a decision on new premises for the College. The premises at Lincoln Place can now only facilitate 50% of activity and a decision in this connection will have to be taken in the coming months.

Dr Abdul Bulbulia, Honorary Treasurer



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Report

This is the last report of my three year term and a number of themes are worth emphasising:

Structure

The three Sub-committees, Competence Assurance, Continuing Medical Education and Quality in Practice serve the Education Committee well. Their roles have continued to be refined in the last three years and have been made clearer to the other structures within the College.

Governance

These Committees have two or three meetings a year and report back to the bi-annual Education Committee meetings. The Education Committee reports to Council and to the Executive in a process of checks and balances.

Relevance

For this to be truly representative of the wishes of the membership we encourage the maximum participation from Council members in the above structures. Recruiting busy GPs for this process is an unending challenge but there is no other way to make the educational priorities of the College both relevant and appropriate to as many of the membership as is possible. We thank the College for providing the Education Committee with the discussion boards on the College website.

As with all change and innovation it will take a while for people to get used to this process of feedback but it is independent of geography or specific times of the day and will help support the voluntary nature of involvement with the Education Committee into the future.

Pictured l-r at the CME Tutor Workshop held in February 2007 in Clontarf Castle are:

Dr Sandra Tighe (Bray/Avoca Scheme), Dr Georgina Connellan (Dublin West Scheme) and Dr Ming Rawat (Dublin Corrigan Scheme)



Range of Activity

Each year the list of courses grows ever longer yet the quality continues. The membership are voting with their feet and attending in greater numbers each passing year. As Chair I have witnessed the enormous work that goes into choosing, researching, recruiting and rolling out new courses and the membership can be justly proud of the calibre of the staff employed by the College to this end.

THE FUTURE

The role of the ICGP in supporting the educational needs of the members in this era of Competence Assurance is well advanced. A prospectus for the full range of educational activity will be launched at this year's AGM. Members will be able to pick and choose modules from individual courses and accumulate CAS credits. The aim is to make the College the first port of call for the educational needs of its membership.

On a personal note I wish to thank Drs Margaret O'Riordan, Colin Bradley and Sorcha Quigley for their commitment and hard work as chairs of the Sub-committees. The College owes them a debt of gratitude. Fionan, Eamonn and Yvette did much to guide and advise me over the three years and they have my thanks. When I accepted Chair of Education several previous Chairs assured me I would get more out of it than I put in. As I finish up I can wholeheartedly agree and wish the same for the incoming Chair.

Dr Mel Bates, Chair Education Committee

COMPETENCE ASSURANCE STRUCTURE SUB-COMMITTEE

MEMBERS OF SUB-COMMITTEE

Fionan O’Cuinneagain, Dr Michael Boland, Carol White, Dr Paul McDonald and Sorcha Quigley.

AIM OF SUB-COMMITTEE

To provide a structure for College members to participate in an ongoing competence assurance structure.

ACTIVITIES IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

I have attended the Educational Committee meetings, Council meetings and both I and Paul McDonald have attended approximately 6 liaison meetings with the Medical Council as part of a steering committee for the proposed pilot Professional Practice Review (PPR).

The figures for those on the GP Special Register who have sent personal folders in the years 2003-2007 are annexed and the breakdown of the applications processed for CME accreditation are also annexed.

The forthcoming General Practitioners Bill and ensuing legislation regarding ongoing CAS has already lead to a great deal of debate regarding doctors’ co-operation with the Medical Council. It is unfortunate that this is also complicated by political agendas regarding lay membership of the Medical Council and recent difficulties between the Medical Council and obstetric consultants. It would appear that CAS is only a matter to time. It is already in place in Australia, New Zealand and Canada for several years now. It is my understanding that other professional bodies require it. I think it is a good idea and general practice wants it.

The time and financial commitments to the profession are substantial. I am unsure what the IMO can negotiate but they have endorsed the necessity for same. I believe we should be more proactive but this would need to be done at the highest level in College.

THE IRISH COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS
COMPETENCE ASSURANCE STRUCTURE SUMMARY – 2003-2007

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Folders/information issued to GPs	191	304	97	44	39
Summary sheet returns by GPs	80	177	175	104 e	Due Jan 2008
Applications Processed for CME Accreditation					
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Total	275	362	324	311	85
- Pharmaceutical	114	165	121	156	41
- GPs	51	91	67	45	15
- Hospital	21	29	22	22	10
- Societies	44	28	33	30	11
- Universities	24	17	23	16	1
- Health Boards	6	12	34	26	4
- Other	15	20	24	16	3

Dr Siorcha Quigley, Chairperson

www.icgp.ie/CAS

QUALITY IN PRACTICE SUB-COMMITTEE

MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE

Chairperson

Dr Margaret O Riordan.

Committee Members

Dr Mel Bates, Dr Michael Boland, Mr Dermot Folan, Ms Maria Leahy, Dr Ailis ni Riain, Dr Seamus O'Baoighill, Dr Ray O'Connor, Dr Ben Parmeter and Dr Sheila Rochford.

SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE

The ICGP Quality in Practice Committee (a Sub-committee of the Education Committee) was established three years ago and has been working on various quality initiatives in the interim.

STATEMENT OF ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES IN 2006 – 2007

- ^ Quality improvement award (sponsored by the Irish Society for Quality and Safety in Healthcare).
- ^ An impact document entitled “Helping Patients with Alcohol Problems - A Guide for Primary Care Staff” has been produced by Mr Rolande Anderson on behalf of the Quality Committee. This document will be launched at the ICGP AGM May 2007.
- ^ An impact document entitled “Cardiovascular Disease in Women” has been produced by Dr Naomh Kenny and Dr Ailis ni Riain on behalf of the ICGP Women’s Health Programme and endorsed by the Quality Committee. This document will be launched at the ICGP Women’s Health Conference May 2007.
- ^ The committee reviewed various patient information websites and subsequently updated the patient information section of the ICGP website: <http://www.icgp.ie/library>.

DETAILED COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

Quality Improvement Award

Ten entries have been received for the 2007 Quality award. Entries detailed improvements or innovations implemented in a general practice setting in Ireland, whether of a clinical or practice management nature. All general practice staff including non-clinical were eligible to enter the competition. The Irish Society for Quality and Safety in Healthcare has agreed to sponsor the award once again. The same procedure will be followed as for last year – entries will be short-listed and the four finalists will be asked to present at a workshop at the ICGP AGM in May 2007. The judges are Dr Mel Bates, Dr Claire Collins,



Dr Ben Parmeter, Dr Margaret O’Riordan and Ms Marie Keogh (President ISQSH).

Dr Sean Bourke (left) receiving the Quality in Practice award at the recent College AGM from Dr Ian Callanan from the Irish Society for Quality in Healthcare. Dr Bourke’s winning entry described his practice’s development of a patient-held diabetes card for use in the management of diabetes in the practice.



Helping Patients with Alcohol Problems - A Guide for Primary Care Staff

An impact document entitled “Helping Patients with Alcohol Problems - A Guide for Primary Care Staff” has been written by Mr Rolande Anderson on behalf of the Quality Committee. This document should prove extremely useful to all GPs and practice staff. It will be launched at the ICGP AGM and will be available to download from the ICGP website at www.icgp.ie/library or www.icgp.ie/qip.

Cardiovascular Disease in Women

An impact document entitled “Cardiovascular Disease in Women” has been produced by Dr Naoimh Kenny and Dr Ailis ni Riain on behalf of the ICGP Women’s Health Programme and endorsed by the Quality Committee. This document will be launched at the ICGP Women’s Health Conference May 2007. It is a very useful and welcome publication and will be available to download from the ICGP website at www.icgp.ie/library or www.icgp.ie/qip.

Patient Information Websites

The Committee reviewed various patient information websites and subsequently updated the patient information section of the ICGP website with links to the Prodigy and Irish Health Education Bureau websites. It is felt that these two sites provide useful independent advice for both doctors and patients.

FUTURE PLANS

The committee are currently working on documents relating to prostate screening in general practice and diabetes care.

Dr Margaret O Riordan, Chairperson

www.icgp.ie/qip



COLLEGE WEBSITE Report

The College website project is responsible for the development and management of the ICGP website – www.icgp.ie/ - in line with the strategic direction of the College. The project aims to create a comprehensive content resource enabling the dissemination of information to members and wider audience. The College website also enables members to make communication and interaction with the College more convenient and efficient as well as marketing and promoting College activities.

The website is a comprehensive content resource. Articles, events, alerts, useful links and publications are updated daily on the website. We are always working on expanding the range of materials available online to ensure that the website is kept current and relevant for members. Whether users need advice on a practice management issue, to read an article from Forum, find a colleague's contact details or download a clinical guideline they are all available on one location.

OTHER MEMBERS OF PROJECT

Ionic, the College's web development company, and Sandra Rooney, SMR Consulting, who provides consulting and project management of web projects requiring integration with the College's membership database.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES/TASKS

- ^ Daily update of website to keep information up to date and relevant.
- ^ Technical support for ICGP members and users of the website.
- ^ Project management of web developments and liaison with Ionic Ltd. and SMR Consulting.
- ^ Formatting of publications for the website.
- ^ Liaison with various College groups (administrators, project directors, committees etc), management of each group's section and communication regarding website developments and tools.
- ^ Creation of online repository of documents so that all staff can locate most recent version of all documents quickly and easily.
- ^ Online marketing and promotion of College events and conferences.
- ^ Presentation of College material in an online, user friendly manner.
- ^ Keep up to date with IT developments and advise College of same.

CURRENT STATUS

There have been a number of developments during the year May 2006 to April 2007:

Secure Areas and Discussion Boards

An important issue for GPs is the lack of time, outside surgery hours, to devote to College committees, faculty meetings and other important events. To assist those members who have an interest in contributing but have limited spare time, we have developed discussion boards and secure document areas and use this online space to hold meetings and conduct College business. Discussion forums are online bulletin boards where users can add ideas, feedback, comments, or documents as well as make decisions and formulate policies. Secure document areas allow documents to be stored in a confidential area of the website. Both features are fully secure and require a username and password to access. These secure, interactive areas harness the best features of working online:

- ^ Secure and confidential
- ^ Easy to access
- ^ Members can work at their pace
- ^ Convenient and efficient– access at any time
- ^ Reduces meeting times
- ^ Reduces isolation

CURRENT DISCUSSION BOARDS

- ^ Assessment Co-ordinators: approximately 12 participants.
- ^ Distance Learning Courses: approximately 150 participants.
- ^ CME Tutors: 35 participants.
- ^ Distance Learning Assessors Group: approximately 12 participants.
- ^ GP Co-op Discussion Area: 21 participants.
- ^ GP Trainees: 330 participants.
- ^ National Association of Programme Directors: approximately 50 participants.
- ^ NAGPT Committee: approximately 12 participants.
- ^ Network of Establishing GPs: 466 participants.
- ^ Research Ethics Committee: 13 participants.
- ^ UCD East Coast Training Programme: 29 participants.
- ^ Donegal Training Programme: approximately 30 participants.
- ^ Education Committee: approximately 30 participants.
- ^ Forum Editorial Board: 15 participants.
- ^ ICGP Projects Scientifics Working Group: 15 participants.

CURRENT SECURE AREAS

- ^ Officers and Executive: 15 participants.
- ^ Research Ethics Committee: 13 participants.
- ^ NAPD: approximately 50 participants.
- ^ Research Committee: 15 participants.
- ^ Council: 60 participants.

A number of enhancements were made in January 2007 to the discussion boards. I can now create administrators for individual boards who can edit, archive and delete topics on their board. This has allowed me to hand over complete control to individual groups. Users can also add more than one attached document to a message. We now have the facility to send an automatic email once a user has created a new topic on a board. We hope that these new features will greatly encourage usage by each group.

GP Training Programme Intake 2007

In January 2007 this year's GP training programme intake took place entirely online. 320 applicants applied for 121 available places using the system and the College noted a significant reduction in the amount of administration effort to manage the application process. This is the third consecutive year that the application process has taken place online.

MICGP Examination Intake 2007

For the second year running the MICGP examination application process was conducted online via www.icgp.ie. This has proved to be very efficient process and the feedback from examination candidates has been very positive. The closing date for the receipt of applications for the MICGP examination was Monday February 12. The projected figure of candidates who will sit the MICGP examination 2007, based on the online applications is 310.

Online Library Catalogue

In conjunction with College library staff, a number of enhancements have been made to the Library and Publications section culminating in the creation of an online library catalogue which went live in September 2006. The online catalogue, which is available at <http://www.icgp.ie/library>, has proven to be a vital tool for all members and the general public in locating and referencing general practice-related publications. Key features include searching, browsing and full-text access (members only) to ICGP publications, online inter-library loan requests and communication with library staff. In conjunction with the catalogue, we are also compiling a research listing. This will allow researchers throughout the country to submit details about their work and allow interested parties to view their contact details and research abstracts. Ultimately, we hope that this will grow to be a useful resource for those undertaking research in general practice. Forum has also been indexed on the site from the year 2000 to date. This allows users to search for Forum articles by author, title/keyword and to be brought to the electronic copy of the article if available electronically on the College website.

Distance Learning Unit

The College Distance Learning Unit was developed to respond to members' need to study at home at a time and a pace that suits them. Course participants attend a small number of workshops during the year and the remainder of time is spent studying at home. Participants access course materials through a protected area of the College website. They upload their assignments from the same area and receive feedback and comments from assessors throughout the course. There is also a protected discussion forum where participants can submit comments and feedback in a secure environment to other course participants and tutors. For information on all distance learning courses go to: <http://www.icgp.ie/dlu>. Developments during 2006-2007:

- ^ Three new courses were added to the distance learning curriculum in 2006/2007 – Certificate in Management in Practice, Certificate in Mental Health and Certificate in Advanced Cognitive Behavioural Therapy.
- ^ Two courses were modularised so that participants may undertake elements of the courses relevant to their needs, without necessarily completing the entire course leading to a Diploma. The modularised plans which began in September 2006 for women's health and therapeutics has allowed a more flexible approach for users wishing to undertake these diplomas.
- ^ In addition, a number of enhancements were made to the online interface for those doing courses. This has enabled the Distance Learning Unit to become a paper free project.

Calendar

An important resource is the online event calendar which contains a searchable listing of all College events such as meetings, courses, conferences and workshops. In addition, a range of meetings from outside groups of interest to GPs are also presented. From January of this year we launched additional features on the calendar - users can search by month, location, host or type of event to find events of interest and get information on venue, programme and how to register. Some College events allow users to register and book accommodation online. We have also begun to include CME/CAS information so that users can easily find accredited meetings and courses in their area. The calendar is available at: <http://www.icgp.ie/events>.

Site Search

We made a number of improvements to the site search in December 2006 to make it easier for members to find the information and publications online. New features include:

- ^ Highlighting of member-only content.
- ^ Highlighting of search terms on the search results.
- ^ Ability to search by date of publication.
- ^ Feature to sort results by date, alphabetically and relevance.

CME Tutors

Since February 2006 and in conjunction with the ICGP librarian Gillian Doran, we have been working closely with the CME small group network to improve communication using the website. A number of initiatives are in progress:

- ^ The tutors have agreed to put all their CME meetings on the online event calendar. Due to the vast number of meeting held nationally we implemented a number of enhancements to the calendar which are outlined above. Currently meeting dates from 17 of the 32 CME small groups are now online at <http://www.icgp.ie/events>. We hope to have dates from all of the groups by September 2007.
- ^ A discussion board was created for the tutor group. Tutors have agreed to upload their bids within 2 weeks of each workshop to the discussion board for use and comment by other tutors.
- ^ After a period of time, these bids are then transferred to the online library catalogue. All users can search bids and find the title and author but only CME tutors can download a copy of a bid for use during CME meetings.
- ^ The CME tutors are currently reviewing their handbook. Once this has been updated it will be added to the CME tutor area of the website.

Online Publications

Managing Occupational Health & Safety in General Practice

In January 2007 the second edition of *Managing Occupational Health & Safety in General Practice* was made available to members of the College through the ICGP website. The publication, by Dr Andree Rochfort ICGP Health in Practice Programme Director, was updated in line with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.



The Practice Nurse: A Guide to Nursing in General Practice

The Practice Nurse: A Guide to Nursing in General Practice was completed in August 2006. The publication is of practical relevance in the first instance to GPs and practice nurses (current and prospective). It enhances an understanding of the role and contribution of the practice nurse, and will impact positively on the quality of care provided to patients.



The GP Registrar Handbook: A Guide for GP Registrars

The aim of the *GP Registrar Handbook* is to provide a ready reference point, information source and assistance on the practicalities of working and training as a GP registrar. The handbook is divided into five sections covering Training and the GP Registrar Years, The Irish Healthcare System & General Practice, Working as a GP Registrar in the Training Practice, Practice Management & the Training Practice and Establishing in Practice After Graduation. The handbook was first published in January 2006 and was updated in January 2007.



MICGP Examination Handbook 2007

The MICGP Examination Handbook is written to advise those undertaking the course on the exam and the rules governing it. It is divided into three sections. Section I of the handbook contains general information regarding the examination including the application procedure for MICGP examination 2007. Section II of the handbook contains information regarding the examination modules. Section III of the handbook contains reports from the MEQ, SEQ and MCQ convenors. The handbook is updated each year.



All online publications are available through the online library catalogue: <http://www.icgp.ie/library>.

GPIT Section

In January 2007 the HSE and the College restructured and reactivated the National General Practice Information Technology (GPIT) Group. There are two parts to the group, an educational section headed by Dr Brian Meade with 12 GPIT facilitators around the country and a projects section with Dr Brian O'Mahony as project manager. In consultation with Dr Brian Meade and Dr Brian O'Mahony a new section was created on the ICGP website. Relevant content from the old GPIT website was transferred including data protection advice, publications, reports, useful links and information on GP software. In addition, information leaflets, articles, GMS circulars and IT frequently asked questions have been added. The GPIT section is available at <http://www.gpit.ie>.

GP Trainees & Network of Establishing GPs

The website aims to support GPs throughout their career, from training to working in practice as an established GP. In consultation with trainees and training programmes, we have created a comprehensive GP training section on the website (see www.icgp.ie/gptraining) containing MICGP examination information, frequently asked questions, guidance on research projects and a range of online resources. In February 2006, the *GP Registrar Handbook* was launched, addressing the practicalities of working and training as a GP registrar. The handbook was updated in January 2007 and will be updated annually to ensure that content does not become stale or out of date. A range of information sheets were also developed in January 2007:

- ^ A Career in General Practice was updated.
- ^ Routes to Training in General Practice: This ICGP booklet provides useful information on training options in general practice. This information covers such subjects as pursuing self-structured training as well as training in Ireland, the UK and abroad, and certification. The booklet provides information for doctors thinking of specialising in general practice as a career, applying for Irish GP training programmes or pursuing general practice training abroad.
- ^ We will develop an information sheet for overseas doctors during 2007 advising them on the practicalities of practising in Ireland.

For the establishing GP, the website contains details on career planning, the managerial aspects of managing and expanding a practice. I will be working with Drs John Ball and Shane McKeogh who were appointed as co-directors of the Network of Establishing GPs in January 2007. We hope to improve content on the NEGs section of the website, update the NEGs database and improve access to the discussion boards. The NEGs area of the website is available at: <http://www.icgp.ie/NEG>.

FUTURE PLANS

Redesign ICGP Website and MYICGP area

It is proposed to redesign the existing ICGP website to provide a new and fresh interface and improve navigation. It is also proposed to develop the MYICGP section of the ICGP website to enhance members' access to electronic services and content. Once a member of the College logs onto the website using their ID and PIN they would be automatically directed to this area which will contain personalised content. These resources would be designed to enhance their practices and assist their continuing professional development.

Members' Directory

During 2007 we will be replacing our current member directory at: <http://www.icgp.ie/findagp>. This will allow members to amend their practice and personal information displayed on the website through a web interface. We will also provide the facilities to upload additional information such as practice and individual GP's opening hours, special interest, practice services, Google mapping and uploading practice photographs.

From an administrative point of view the online directory will be linked with Quercus Plus the College's membership database. This will mean that if information is changed on a member's details on Quercus Plus it will automatically be updated on the website also. At the moment the two systems operate separately so that changes need to be made to two systems. Thus the new online directory will help to streamline administrative tasks and make the process more efficient.

Website Access

In 2007 we will work on an interface to allow users to change their PIN number via the website. We will also be merging the user/security section of the website with the Quercus Plus membership database. This will allow us to provide more personalised and customisable content for members.

Marketing & Promotions

During 2007-2008, a considerable effort will be put into improving the profile of the College and its website among members, College sub-groups and outside bodies. See the Public Relations and Communications Report.

Communications

We are looking into the development of an e-newsletter management system which would allow us to distribute regular newsletters to member's email accounts to improve communications.

Annual Updates

- ^ Distance Learning – live by 31st July 2007. Requirements to be compiled.
- ^ GP Training Application – live by 1st December 2007. Requirements to be compiled.
- ^ MICGP Exam Application – live by 1st November 2007. Requirements to be compiled.

Angela Byrne, Web Content Manager

www.icgp.ie



PUBLIC RELATIONS & COMMUNICATIONS Report

Following the departure of Fiona Brophy in June 2006 it was decided to divide the post of PR/Media Liaison into two positions covering communications and media liaison. In November 2006, Sylvia Browne and Angela Byrne were both appointed on a part-time basis.

Angela will primarily deal with communications to various groups and web-based queries, Sylvia will be the ICGP media liaison.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES/TASKS

- ^ Liaise between journalists and College spokespersons/personnel.
- ^ Organise and facilitate media coverage for AGM and other College meetings & events.
- ^ Develop & maintain a dynamic communication process embracing College staff/projects, faculties and members.
- ^ Organise workshops in media skills for College spokespersons.
- ^ Collate monthly College news for Forum.
- ^ Facilitate meetings of Editorial Board of Forum.

CURRENT STATUS

Since our appointment in November 2006 we have began a number of new initiatives:

Media Relations

Press releases and photographs issued to the media:

- ^ MICGP Examiners Workshop, October 2006.
- ^ ICGP / NAGPT Conference, October 2006.
- ^ MIP Practice Staff Course, Cork October 2006.
- ^ ICGP Winter Meeting, November 2006.
- ^ ICGP/PGM&DB (HSE/METR) Careers Day, December 2006.
- ^ Distance Learning Workshop, January 2007.
- ^ HIQA Announcement of Projects, January 2007.
- ^ Scales Graduation, March 2007.
- ^ GPIT Press Release, March 2007.

The following topics have also been emailed to members since January 2007:

- ^ ICGP Clinical Update Road-show - Safe Prescribing for General Practitioners.
- ^ International Osteoporosis Foundation Osteoporosis Course with Densitometry Certification.
- ^ Free Access to British Medical Journal and BMJ Learning for ICGP Members.
- ^ GP Study Day in Beaumont Hospital (Dublin area only).
- ^ Growing Up in Ireland - the National Longitudinal Study of Children.
- ^ Pandemic Influenza Preparedness for Ireland: Advice of the Pandemic Influenza Expert Group.
- ^ National Disease Surveillance Sentinel Network Seeks New Participating Practices.
- ^ National Neurosciences Needs Assessment Consultation with GPs (Selected group only).
- ^ Distance Learning Palliative Care Course.
- ^ Moving Points in Palliative Care 2007 - Our Lady's Hospice Conference.

Forum

Angela Byrne continued to collate monthly Forum news from ICGP staff and Committees. A meeting of the Forum Editorial Board was held on the 17th November 2006. Among the actions agreed were the following to generate article and editorial ideas:

- ^ Angela Byrne created a discussion board for the Forum Editorial Board to help improve communications between members.
- ^ Angela Byrne agreed to include Forum content in proposed monthly e-bulletin to members and to encourage feedback on contents.
- ^ Niall Hunter to compose instructions for writers on how to write articles for Forum.
- ^ Panel to be formed for Clinical Review Service.
- ^ Angela Byrne and Gillian Doran undertook to write a series of articles on using the ICGP website, evidence based medicine sites as well as other useful websites via www.icgp.ie. An article on the library was published in February and one on searching the ICGP website was published in April. An article will appear bi-monthly on a list of topics.
- ^ ICGP to look into organising writers weekend for members who may be interested in developing their writing skills and contributing to Forum.

E-Bulletin

Every two months, information is collected from College programme and project directors and collated into a bi-monthly e-newsletter outlining a summary of activity for the coming four months. The development of the e-newsletter was developed in response to requests for a bulletin board or newsletter to be set up to inform College directors and staff of upcoming activities in the College. The information is also used to collate Forum news each month and to help plan PR and marketing activity. To date three e-newsletters have been distributed to all ICGP staff.

Bi-yearly Newsletter to Members

It was decided to compose a bi-yearly newsletter to keep members informed of College activities and services as well as important events relating to general practice. The first newsletter (autumn 2006 - winter 2007) was distributed in December 2006 and the spring-summer 2007 newsletter will be distributed in May/June 2007.

Friendly URLs

In order to improve navigation on the website and make it easier for users to find information easily, we have created individual web addresses for each section. For example, instead of users having to enter the address <http://www.icgp.ie/index.cfm/loc/18-4.htm> in order to get to the



membership area of the site they can now enter <http://www.icgp.ie/membership>. These web addresses will be used on all marketing and promotional materials – such as adverts, brochures and reports.

European Journal of General Practice

Every four months we collate a summary of news relating to Irish general practice for the European Journal of General Practice.

Communications with Non-Members

In May 2007 a bulletin will be distributed to non-members of the College informing them of the range of College services available and of the new route to becoming a member of the College through equivalent qualifications.

Online Marketing of ICGP Website

In 2007 we undertook a range of online marketing initiatives to promote the College website and increase traffic to the website.

- ^ Placed website address on all material and created friendly URLs (see above).
- ^ Created of reciprocal links with equivalent organisations and health-related agencies.
- ^ Search engine registration.
- ^ Registration with online directories.
- ^ Creation of meta-tags (keywords placed on each page to maximise hits from search engines).
- ^ Collaborated with public relations department and publicising of all new developments on the website.
- ^ Place information and graphs here on website statistics and increase.

FUTURE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- ^ Update College database - useful contacts by area of interest.
- ^ Update College website (MyICGP, Membership areas).
- ^ Creation of email newsletters to in-house and external groups.
- ^ Media training.

Sylvia Browne, Media Liaison

Angela Byrne, Web & Communications Manager



LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICE Report

Once again the ICGP library has been actively involved in many aspects of College activities throughout the year May 2006 – April 2007. The ICGP Library and Information Service is continuing to grow and manage the variety and volume of information demands over the last few years.

USERS OF THE SERVICE 2006-2007

The users of the ICGP Library and Information Service are varied as evidenced from the list below. Their information needs are also as diverse covering personal interest, clinical, educational and professional areas:

- ^ ICGP members (including CME tutors, trainees, trainers).
- ^ ICGP course participants.
- ^ ICGP project directors and staff.
- ^ Other Irish general practitioners.
- ^ Health Service Executive staff.
- ^ Healthcare professionals.
- ^ Irish health sciences libraries around the country.

^ Students from universities conducting general practice research.

^ General public.

^ National media.

^ Pharmaceutical companies.

GENERAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ICGP LIBRARY

^ Answering telephone, fax and email requests for information.

^ Conducting literature searches on specific topics for private research, clinical queries, theses etc.

^ Ordering of materials i.e. articles, reports, books etc.

^ Training.

PRESENTATIONS

We had many requests to present at a range of College meetings throughout the year.

^ I presented at the NAGPT Conference in October 2006. I gave a brief overview of some of the web developments that have taken place throughout the year and some useful resources for them to be familiar with when conducting research.

^ Sessions for the small group CME tutors were held at their workshops in May 2006 in Galway, September 2006 in Sligo and February 2007 in Dublin. Angela and I have developed the College website and library catalogue to facilitate the uploading and maintenance of tutor bids. We also provided individual training to all of the tutors on this facility and have supported their queries at the workshops.

^ Trish and I presented at several of the Distance Learning Unit workshops over the last year. In September we gave an overview of what services the Library and Information Service can provide to assist participants with their studies/research. I also gave a session in the therapeutics workshop dealing with evaluating websites as part of their critical evaluation of resources.

^ Following on from the September sessions we were asked to deliver a more detailed demonstration of how to perform a literature search for distance learning participants in January 2007.

^ Bespoke handouts and resource materials were provided for all the presentations listed above and received very positive feedback from the general practitioners and other course participants.

HSE LIBRARY

Many ICGP members may be aware that the HSE librarians around the country launched a website www.hselibrary.ie and current HSE employees can access various online resources through this site. We have attended several meetings in relation to this and have given our support both verbally and in writing to the group. We have also expressed an interest in future co-operation with the HSE to extend the access to electronic resources to all GPs throughout the country.

IRISH JOURNAL OF CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISING COMMITTEE

Since January 2006, I am a volunteer member and secretary to the Irish Journal Co-operative Organising Committee. The remit of this committee is to manage the Irish Health Care Libraries Journals Holdings through:

- ^ Decision-making in relation to membership and criteria for membership.
- ^ Decision-making regarding content and discipline.
- ^ Copyright issues.
- ^ Group inter-lending statistics.
- ^ Collation, production and reporting and website management.

In the past year I have represented the ICGP on the Committee at 3 meetings. The networking opportunities and my participation in the Committee are valuable in terms of professional development of the ICGP Library.

The most important development in this area in the past year has been the development and implementation of an online journal listing for all the member libraries throughout the country. This has considerably improved the efficiency of the journal listing for all members and facilitated the considerable amount of annual amendments required.

COURSES

Trish and I attended several courses throughout the year including:

Marketing your Library Service (August 2006)

The objectives of this course were to:

- ^ Consider the benefits of marketing.
- ^ Introduce theories of marketing and how they can be practically adopted by the library information service professional.
- ^ Explore real-world opportunities for marketing library and information services in an efficient and effective manner.

Identifying the Evidence for Systematic Review (January 2007)

This course provided information professionals with an awareness of the particular issues involved in systematic reviews, such as extensive literature searching, bibliographic management and preparing costings. It covered the following aspects:

Systematic Reviews

- ^ How supporting a systematic review is different from supporting other types of projects.

- ^ How information professionals can be involved in supporting systematic reviews.

Literature Searching

- ^ Search techniques and approaches.
- ^ Databases.

Other Support Services

- ^ Preparing a bid/costing the information component for a proposal.
- ^ Managing references.
- ^ Documenting the search process.

Electronic Resources Seminar (February 2007)

This seminar on electronic resources provided an opportunity to learn about the latest technological resources such as Library 2.0, blogs, wikis, Podcasts etc. being used in Irish libraries as well as some interesting case studies on institutional repositories, managing e-resources and the HSE Repository and Digital Media Archive Programme.

Cochrane Collaboration & Other Resources

Both Trish and I were successful in our applications for the half day Cochrane course which was held in September 2006. We plan to apply for the two-day course at a later date and we hope to be accepted so that we can further develop our understanding of systematic reviews and thereby further support the GPs who are undertaking such research.

The Cochrane Collaboration held their colloquium in Dublin in October 2006. We attended the all Ireland session and learnt the challenges of producing a review. It was also a valuable opportunity to hear the various people and organisations conducting such research in Ireland.

Trish attended a SWETS meeting in Dublin in January 2007. She gained useful knowledge regarding online journal access and about the new version of DataswetsConnect due to be launched by SWETS at the end of June 2007.

Trish organised membership of another online document delivery service (Subito) in 2006. This new addition to our article request service has increased our access and efficiency in document provision. We have retained our membership of the British Library Document Supply Service and the Irish Health Sciences Libraries Group.

We believe our active participation with these outside bodies will assist us with our aim of facilitating the research process for ICGP members. We shall continue to work closely with GP members, ICGP project

directors, ICGP staff and others to further promote the ICGP Library and Information Service and help enhance the body of research regarding general practice in Ireland.

WEBSITE AND CATALOGUE

The ICGP website continues to grow and we have worked throughout the year to expand the range of materials available online to ensure that the library content is kept current and relevant for members. The library catalogue is proving to be a very useful resource and usage and feedback has been very positive from members. It is available on the library homepage www.icgp.ie/library.

We continue to provide web links to useful online resources. New additions to the library homepage include a new table of contents facility. It is a listing of the table of contents of all journals currently available in the ICGP library from the previous month. It is published on a monthly basis. Issues are available from December 2006 to date. A special thanks to Trish for maintaining this service. Any suggestions/feedback regarding the Library content on the ICGP website can be sent to Gillian or Trish.

Research Listing

The research listing is now available on www.icgp.ie/library and it is our aim to further develop this resource in the coming year. It allows researchers around the country to submit basic details regarding their work. This will hopefully allow other interested parties to view researchers contact details and abstracts if available. Ultimately it is hoped that this will be a useful resource for those undertaking general practice related research around Ireland.

Forum

Angela Byrne (Web Content Manager) and I are in the process of writing a series of articles in Forum covering various topics relating to the ICGP website and the ICGP Library and Information Service. This series will appear every two months throughout 2007. The first article was in November 2006 discussing the ICGP website. It was followed in February 2007 with an article looking at the ICGP Library and Information Service. April 2007 dealt with untangling the website to provide users with easy navigation and use.

Intellectual Property Policy

In order to develop an ICGP Intellectual Property Policy, Trish, Angela and I have examined various other organisations policies and we are in the process of producing a draft version for ICGP.

Electronic Resources

There is a growing trend in the use of library electronic resources. Primarily these are Refworks and SurveyMonkey. Refworks has been used to produce references for various publications and reports by College project directors throughout the year including the *Early Detection of Cancer: A Needs' Assessment of General Practitioners*, the *Warfarin in General Practice* guideline and the soon to be launched *Screening for Prostate Cancer*

in General Practice. While SurveyMonkey has assisted various College activities to be facilitated online including course evaluations, training requirements, meeting dates etc.

FUTURE PLANS

- ^ To continue to develop the library catalogue and to promote its usage by general practitioners and their staff.
- ^ To promote the usage of the research listing by general practitioners and other researchers.
- ^ I am collaborating with the Midlands Training Programme to establish how I can best assist the GP trainees with their research projects. I intend to visit the Training Programme later in the year. I will schedule an appointment with each trainee, to discuss and also perform a brief literature review for each of their topics. If this pilot is successful we may consider expanding the service to the other Training Programmes.
- ^ To further develop electronic resources and their usage within the College.
- ^ Trish and I intend to further participate in some Continuing Professional Development Courses, run by the Irish Health Sciences Libraries Group. Courses we hope to attend in the coming months include Teaching Methods (Summer 2007) and Advanced Internet Searching (September 2007).

Ms Gillian Doran (Librarian) and Ms Trish Patton (Assistant Librarian)

www.icgp.ie/library



CHAIR OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Report

At its first meeting in September 2004, the ICGP Research Committee identified the twin themes of ‘developing research capacity’ and ‘supporting original research in general practice’ as its primary objectives for its three-year term. During 2007, the research portfolio of the ICGP has continued to expand considerably in both thematic areas:

SUPPORTING ORIGINAL RESEARCH

a. Primary Care Epidemiology

In 2004, the ICGP identified a need for original epidemiological data on morbidity in general practice and recognised the potential benefits of such information in the future planning and delivery of primary care in Ireland. With this brief, the ICGP Research Committee has been developing a proposal for a programme of work to provide a mechanism to collect data regarding morbidity among patients attending general practice and to describe general practice epidemiology, including health seeking behaviour, the consultation

process, diagnostic and therapeutic outcomes and natural history of primary care illness. The ICGP has recently been awarded funding by the Interim Health Information and Quality Authority that will support this programme over the next three years. Work of this nature has been conducted previously in the UK, the Netherlands and Australia and this work has been instrumental in determining priorities in service development.

b. Collaboration with External Agencies

The ICGP continues to develop strategic links with many agencies involved in primary care research. In addition, it continues to operate a standard operating policy that informs ICGP policy on involvement in and collaboration on external research activity. This has been developed in response to representations from members indicating the number of requests to become involved in research had become unmanageable. The new procedures have limited the number of requests that ICGP members now receive to participate in research and have ensured that members are only asked to participate in research on which the ICGP / general practice has had a material contribution to the design.

One of the first projects undertaken as part of these collaborative efforts was the *Early Detection of Cancer in General Practice: A Needs' Assessment* – a collaborative study with the Irish Cancer Society. The study report was published in 2006. This work, led by Dr Claire Collins and Dr Helena Daly has described the central role of general practice in cancer care in Ireland and identified potential opportunities to improve detection rates. The ICGP extends its sincere appreciation to all its members who participated in this important work.

The ICGP has increased the number and range of research projects on which it is collaborating with external agencies (details included in the report of the National Director of Research).

c. Recognition of Excellence in Original Research by GPs / GPs in Training

The College continues to recognise excellence in original research by awarding educational bursaries to the principal investigator on the best research projects presented at both the Winter and Annual General Meetings respectively and for attendance at the EGPRN and WONCA conferences. In addition, the long-established Research and Education Foundation continues to fund original research conducted by ICGP members. To ensure the scheme continues to meet the needs of the ICGP and its members, this scheme continues to be subject to ongoing review.

DEVELOPING RESEARCH CAPACITY

a. Research at National Meetings

Since 2004, research has been re-established as an integral and prominent constituent at the College's two national meetings. The AGM continues to feature a session in which GPs in training are invited to present original research in moderated poster format, while the College Winter Meeting continues to feature a session in which all GPs are invited to present their research in the same format.

b. Development of a National Primary Care Research Network

The potential benefits to patient care that result from the establishment of a national research networks are widely recognised. Since 2004, the ICGP has been working towards the goal of establishing such an infrastructure in primary care, in collaboration with the constituent departments of the Association of University Departments of General Practice in Ireland (AUDGPI) and remains committed to this goal.

c. Research Training

In response to feedback from members and specialist training programmes, the College has been providing substantial support to GPs or GPs in training undertaking research. A series of regional research training workshops was held in 2005 and 2006. These workshops continue into 2007 on a regional basis and in response to local demand.

d. Web Resources

Since late 2005, the research section of the College website (www.icgp.ie/research) has been a comprehensive and dynamic one-stop shop of web and text based research resources. In 2006, a database of research and researchers has been added to this portfolio of resources.

COMMENTARY

As it concludes its term, the Research Committee of the ICGP has made considerable progress in the programme of work it undertook in September 2004 and achieved many of the objectives it set itself at the outset. The expansion in the College's research portfolio has been in no small part to the active involvement and constructive engagement of our colleagues on the Research Committee and I wish to thank them for their insight and work.

As in previous reports, I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to Angela Byrne, Gillian Doran, Dermot Folan, and Fionan Ó'Cuinneagain whose work has supported many of the initiatives described in this report, to Michael Boland and Carol White who continue to directly advise and support the ICGP's research activities and finally to the College's National Director of Research, Claire Collins who has been central to and has led on most of the initiatives described in this report.

Dr Walter Cullen, Chairperson Research Committee

www.icgp.ie/research



DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH Report

A dedicated research section was established in the ICGP in 2004 with the appointment of Dr Claire Collins as Director of Research. The purpose of this role is to promote and support good methodological research in primary care and to increase ICGP participation in research. The Research Programme within the ICGP runs initially from June 2004-June 2007 on a half-time basis. In 2006/2007, additional research articles and guidance documents have been written and are available on the research section of the ICGP website (www.icgp.ie/research/). Research workshops continue to be held annually around the country in collaboration with the AUDGPI and others. A web-based listing of research projects was developed and provides a resource for researchers to identify collaborators and to review projects completed and in progress. All researchers are welcome to list their research projects (www.icgp.ie/library/). Efforts in the late 2006/early 2007 period also focused on building collaborations, seeking funding and conducting primary care research. A number of projects were commenced in as a result of such activity. The reports of projects completed are available on www.icgp.ie. As a result of research grants received, two new research personnel were employed in early 2007.

OTHER MEMBERS OF PROJECT GROUP

ICGP Research Committee

Ms Carol White, ICGP

DETAILED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Projects Completed

- ^ Early Detection of Cancer: A Needs' Assessment of General Practitioners.
- ^ National Telephone Survey: Risk groups for Influenza, Uptake of Influenza and Pneumococcal Vaccine, and the Burden of Influenza-like Illness in the Adult Population of Ireland during the 2005/2006 Influenza season.
- ^ Audit of GP Referral Guidelines for Suspected Cancer – HSE Dublin Mid-Leinster.

Pictured at the launch of the ICS/ICGP 'Early Detection Of Cancer - A Needs Assessment of General Practitioners' Report are: Dr Tony Holohan, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health & Children; Dr Helena Daly, ICGP ICS Research Fellow; Mr John McCormack, CEO, Irish Cancer Society; Dr Claire Collins, Director of Research, ICGP and Dr Michael Boland, Director, ICGP Postgraduate Resource Centre



Projects Underway

- ^ Development of a healthy lifestyle education package for general practice.
- ^ Morbidity and epidemiology in general practice: a feasibility study on disease coding and the collection of morbidity data from general practice.
- ^ Patients' depiction of their general practitioner/family physician across Europe – in collaboration with College National des Generalistes Enseignants (CNGE) France.
- ^ Continuing Medical Education in Ireland: How does the market function?
- ^ A needs assessment of neuroscience services – in collaboration with the HSE Public Health Directorate.
- ^ Rotavirus infection: a pan-European study - in collaboration with the HSE Western Area (Public Health).

- ^ In-depth epidemiological analysis of the HeartWatch database and additional research on this population - in collaboration with UCD School of Public Health and Population Science.
- ^ A needs' assessment of services for people with arthritis and relation conditions: a survey of general practitioners – in collaboration with the HSE Public Health Directorate.
- ^ Bowel Screening Pilot Project – in collaboration with AMNCH Tallaght.
- ^ Revolutionising Chronic Disease Management with Information and Communication Technology: A socio-technical project applied to epilepsy care in Ireland – in collaboration with Beaumont Hospital.

In addition to the above activities, the Director of research has also represented the ICGP on a number of committees and project advisory groups including funding panels for the Health Research Board and the Irish Heart Foundation. Assistance has been provided to other ICGP Directors in the design and data analysis aspects of the research, audit and evaluation associated with their programmes. Advice has also been provided to both GP researchers and non GP researcher conducting research in general practice.

Pictured at the GP Registrar Poster Presentations at the 2006 College AGM are:

Dr Jonathan Egan, Dr Fionnuala Murphy, Dr Claire Collins (ICGP Director of Research), Dr Jean Murphy and Dr Joan Mulqueen. The winning poster by Dr Murphy surveyed patients and doctors on their attitudes to the availability of the morning-after pill.



STATEMENT OF ACHIEVEMENTS/OUTCOMES TO DATE

- ^ Monthly research methodology articles were written for FORUM and a series of 'how-to' guidelines are now available on the ICGP website: www.icgp.ie/research.
- ^ The design of web-based listing of research projects being undertaken in general practice and by general practitioners has been finalised in conjunction with the ICGP Librarian and Web Manager. This will provide a resource for researchers to identify collaborators and to review projects completed and in progress.
- ^ Collaboration with external agencies on general practice related research has been fostered.
- ^ Successful in obtaining substantial research funding with the ICGP is now leading on a number of research projects.

FUTURE PLANS

The focus for 2007/2008 will be on completing the research projects commenced and obtaining further external funding to conduct relevant research projects (where possible on a national scale), and on continuing to advance national research capacity-building initiatives.

Dr Claire Collins, Director of Research

www.icgp.ie/research



CHAIR OF RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Report

On 17th May 2005 the ICGP was approved by the DOHC to review clinical trials under the European Communities Regulations 2004 relating to Clinical Trials of Medicinal Products for Human Use - enacted by Minister for Health & Children, May 2004. The Committee meets on four occasions each year. The Standard Operating Procedures and dates for meetings can be viewed on www.icgp.ie/research. Below is a breakdown of the research/trials that the committee reviewed between June 2005 – April 2007.

Type of Study	June 2005 – April 2007
Pharmaceutical Clinical	3
Pharmaceutical Non Clinical	7
Hospital	-
Nurse	4
University	2
GP/Trainee	45
Other	5
Total	66

MEMBERSHIP

The committee is made up of expert and lay members.

Expert Members

Dr Niall Maguire (Chair)

Dr Walter Cullen

Dr Thomas Maher

Ms Marie Faughey

Prof Colin Bradley

Dr Cliona McGovern

Lay Members

Dr David Smith

Dr Teresa Maguire

Mrs Anne O' Cuinneagain

Ms Pauline Tierney (Admin)

Ms Carol White (Acting Admin)

Dr Niall Maguire, Chairperson

www.icgp.ie/research