

Chief Executive's Report

AUTHOR | MR FIONAN O'CUINNEAGAIN

In my report for last year I stated "2009 of course, is the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the College. There will be much reflection on these 25 years – the changes that have occurred in general practice, work practices, the health care structure, regulation, patient expectations and more".



Over the past year, the remit, relationships and process relevant to general practice, the ICGP and the statutory bodies - the Medical Council, HSE and HIQA - have clarified to a large degree but still "more to do".

The key relationships for the ICGP in the immediate future will be with the Medical Council and the HSE – METR and the National Director of Clinical Care.

THE MEDICAL COUNCIL

At the time of writing the Minister for Health and Children has signed Part 11 of the Medical Practitioners' Act thereby requiring the implementation of Professional Competence for all registered medical practitioners with effect from 1st May 2010. Some detail on the proposed structures and process under discussion are outlined in this report by Dr Ailis Ni Riain, Director, Advocacy and Professional Competence. The Medical Council and the recognised training bodies now have 12 months to put the programmes and process in place in order to meet the requirements of the Act. The College will be communicating developments on a regular basis to members. In general the view of the College is to support members in achieving the requirements established by the Medical Council.

A further important development will be the Medical Council criteria for the re-accreditation of recognised training bodies. This is likely to be a rigorous process encompassing, from the ICGP perspective, GP intern rotations, GP training and all aspects of professional competence. The implementation of these developments will place significant demands on members and will have resource implications for the College, the source of which has yet to be defined by the Medical Council.

HEALTH SERVICES EXECUTIVE

METR (Medical Education, Training and Research Unit)

During the past year the HSE-METR and the College embarked on a review of the structure and governance of GP training. This process is ongoing but the likely outcome will involve the ICGP centrally taking direct responsibility for all aspects of the delivery of GP training. This will be achieved by way of agreement with HSE-METR including agreed budgets. Again, this change will have resource implications for the College yet to be defined.

Another area under discussion with HSE-METR is the future role and development of the CME (small group) Network. Discussions in this regard are at a preliminary stage but ultimately will require change with particular reference to the professional competence structures.

National Director Clinical Care - HSE

The National Director Clinical Care, Dr Barry White, will be delivering the keynote address at this year's AGM. This will focus on the development and role of the Clinical Directors including the proposed GP Clinical Directors and the Clinical Programmes of Care which will develop integrated care models for chronic diseases and other designated services. These developments are at an early stage but clearly will have an impact on improved patient outcomes which will also require increased roles for general practice and primary care

HIQA (HEALTH INFORMATION & QUALITY AUTHORITY)

The current legislation which established HIQA and its remit does not extend to general practice. However, it would be unrealistic to think that at some stage in the coming years that the remit of HIQA would not be extended to include general practice. Again, this will be a rigorous process if one reflects on the application of the accreditation for nursing homes and other institutions to date. One area where the College has interacted with HIQA is that relating to the introduction of unique identifiers for patients and the need to provide for standardised secure messaging between general practice and hospitals/institutions. It is expected that the pending legislation on "Health Information", which is expected to be published during the course of the coming year, will address these and other issues.

THE FORUM OF POST GRADUATE BODIES

Some four years ago all of the recognised training bodies agreed to establish the Forum as a vehicle to exchange information and adopt a common approach to issues of interest or of impact on training bodies. Whereas the Forum may adopt a position it does not override the independence of the participating recognised training bodies.

The ICGP is a founding member of the Forum and is represented on all strands. The Forum has been enormously beneficial in defining positions, participating in various processes and influencing developments generally relating to standards, training and education. The Forum has engaged extensively with the HSE and the Medical Council resulting in a common/standard approach to many areas including a

standard framework agreement for medical training and a framework for the delivery of professional competence. Whereas the detail of ICGP requirements will differ from other training bodies, the development of agreed frameworks ensures that all training bodies are operating to a common standard.

CONCLUSION

The above is a general view of some of the changes and influences which will impact on the ICGP and by extension general practitioners in the coming years. It is incumbent on the College to support the specialty of general practice and individual members in meeting these statutory requirements. As a result the College itself is undertaking a fundamental review of its structures and these will be communicated over the coming year or so. It will also require that the specialty through the College holds its own as a defined medical discipline. This will require greater input by members and likely more resources. However, more of that anon.

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the College Council, Executive and Committees, and the College Staff for their continuing commitment over what has been a difficult year.

President's Report

AUTHOR | DR LIAM LACEY

My year as President of the ICGP is nearly at an end. I hand over the office to Dr Brendan Day at our AGM 2010 in Galway.

Representing our College for the past year has been an honour and a privilege. I have met so many people who have acknowledged the important role that the College plays in setting standards by general practice to ensure best practice for our patients. We have truly arrived in our rightful place to continue to set and achieve goals to ensure a better primary health care service delivery. We look forward to being involved in the development of Primary Care Teams throughout the country and are ready to play our part. The future role of the College will include our being involved in both training and professional competence in general practice. Again, we intend to rise to the challenge.

I was thrilled to have been President of the College during the celebration of the 25th Anniversary which was marked by a well attended and very successful function held in November in Kilmainham Hospital. I would like to mention the retirement of Dr. Michael Boland and the honour bestowed on him and his wife Susan at the dinner in Kilmainham Hospital. Michael's service to the College will never be forgotten.

I would like to give my personal thanks to the staff of the College for the way they looked after me. Especially Orla and Caroline. Many thanks to you both. I enjoyed being a part of the Executive, once again, and I must say that the calibre of the people serving at both Executive and Council level is amazing. I take my hat off to them all.

Fionan deserves a special mention. I worked closely with him at foundation level in the early days and his dedication to the College is second to none. Thank you, Fionan.

I would like to thank my lovely wife Patricia for her company and support throughout the year.

Having met the younger aspiring GP members of our College during my term, I can only say that the future of our College looks bright and assured.



Chairman's Report

AUTHOR | DR MARK WALSH

INTRODUCTION

This report represents a summary of the principal issues and activities that have engaged the ICGP over the past year. It is by no means comprehensive or exhaustive nor do the various headings indicate any order of priority. It should be read in conjunction with and in the context of the individual reports from the various Sub-committees and programmes within College.



This has been an eventful year and this is an incredibly important time for general practice. It is vital that the College remains strong to reinforce the value of our core work in day to day contact with our patients and to respond to the challenges and opportunities that lay ahead for general practice.

MEMBERSHIP

The ICGP continues to grow and prosper, membership is now of the order of 2,526 representing approximately 90% of general practitioners in Ireland and with the addition of associates and trainees the numbers to which the ICGP provides a service rise to 3,438.

This year sees a further increase in the educational opportunities and services being developed as a support to members throughout their careers.

COMPETENCE ASSURANCE

At the time of writing this report the Minister has signed the order commencing part 11 of The Medical Practitioner's Act 2007 which requires GPs to undergo mandatory maintenance of Professional Competence. The Medical Council will have one year to have the scheme in operation.

The College has established a Professional Competence Steering Committee and continues to work with the Medical Council and the Forum of Postgraduate Training Bodies towards the goal of facilitating GPs to fulfil their requirements in Professional Competence.

GENERAL PRACTICE TRAINING

For many years the ICGP has outlined the current and projected deficiencies in the number of general practitioners working in the country and the need to train more doctors for careers in general practice.

Following on from ongoing discussions between the ICGP and the HSE the number of training places has been increased by a factor of 30% to 157.

This increase is reflected in the initiation of a new GP Training Programme in Dublin's north inner city and some adjustments within the existing Training Programmes.

Much credit is due to Dr Margaret O'Riordan, Director of Postgraduate Training in co-ordinating the organisation of the practical requirements to enable this expansion.

The attendance and participation at the National Workshops for both trainers and trainees has been encouraging.

While it is important to increase the numbers going through conventional Training Programmes there are some doctors who fall short of the current specialist training requirements but wish to pursue a career in general practice. Some of these have completed equivalent of the hospital based portion of training in recognised posts and lack any formal training in a GP setting while others are currently actively working general practice.

These doctors constitute a valuable resource and some further consideration of a robust system of 'Phase 2 Training' or practice validation/mentoring may have some merit.

“While it is important to increase the numbers going through conventional Training Programmes there are some doctors who fall short of the current specialist training requirements but wish to pursue a career in general practice....”

EDUCATION

Education remains one of the core functions of College. Much work has been done towards securing HETAC recognition for ICGP courses and it is hoped that this project will be completed successfully in the near future. The Courses Unit continues to develop new courses and modify existing ones to enhance the quality of the learning experience.

Small group learning maintains a significant degree of popularity around the country with approximately 70% of GPs being regular participants at meetings organised through the CME Tutor Network.

A complete list of courses available from the ICGP is available on the College website at www.icgp.ie/courses. There has been no increase in the cost of courses this year in view of the stringent economic climate and much work has been done to ensure that the quality of the educational experience does not suffer. There is a 10% early bird reduction on all courses for those who register by 19th June 2010.

RESEARCH

Participation in research has become more difficult in the current climate of diminished sources of funding for research and increased competition for limited resources. A number of projects are nearing completion and it is intended that these would go on to publication.

A National Conference on GP Research (“Strengthening General Practice through Research and Audit”) is planned for June 2010 and will be held in Kilkenny, in conjunction with the Summer School. In addition, an online booklet titled “Picture of GP Research in Ireland 2010” including abstracts from the conference, ongoing research and selected trainee projects will be produced towards the end of the year.

ICGP STRATEGIC PLAN 2008 – 2013

The Promoting Partnership with Patients initiative is seen by the ICGP as being very worthwhile and has been assigned a high degree of priority. International literature supports the premise that public/patient involvement in the planning and implementation of healthcare is of considerable importance. As an organisation the College has to consider how to maximise the opportunities for patients through their representative organisations to have a real, meaningful and structured input into our policy making process.

THE H1N1 PANDEMIC

For several years the ICGP has been working with the HSE through the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) in defining the role of general practice in the event of an anticipated pandemic. During the summer and autumn of 2009 ‘Swine Flu’ emerged and the level of alertness was cranked up relatively quickly to level 6 by the World Health Organisation.

General practice involvement included clinical care of patients who were concerned that they might have contracted ‘swine flu’ and also in the vaccination of defined groups of patients.

This proved to be quite a difficult and stressful time for general practitioners for several reasons including defining and identifying 'at risk groups', uncertainty in the safety and supply of the vaccine, concerns over indemnity issues, the logistics of vaccine administration and the lack of engagement of the HSE/DoHC with all GP representative organisations – particularly the IMO.

However, yet again those general practitioners who participated in the vaccination programme demonstrated their ability to deliver a personal service to their patients in an efficient manner reinforcing the premise that with appropriate resources such vaccination programmes are best delivered in a general practice setting.

25 YEARS ANNIVERSARY

During this year the College celebrated its 25th year in existence. At this landmark it is appropriate to reflect on both past achievements and future goals. Although 25 years is a comparatively short period of time in the context of many of our sister organisations and academic bodies most of the goals and aspirations of the formative years of the ICGP have been attained. A flavour of the experience of this time can be gleaned from the publication "Celebrating 25 years 1984 – 2009" which was produced for the 25th anniversary and released at the Celebratory Dinner in November at the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham.

This function also provided the opportunity for the College to award the first-ever '**Gradam Medal**' which was struck as the College's acknowledgement of outstanding contribution by an individual. It is most appropriate that Dr Michael Boland was the first recipient of this prestigious award.

REPRESENTATION

Over recent years there has been a trend of an increasing number of requests for ICGP representation from a variety of sources such as patient organisations, interest groups, statutory bodies, project teams operating within the HSE and many others. While it is important that general practice has a voice and informs change it would be impossible for the College to respond positively to all requests and preference has to be assigned to areas which are deemed to be worthy of priority.

The issues of time away from practice and resources are important and where direct representation is not feasible the nomination of a specific liaison GP for a host agency may be an option. A policy on how to manage representation taking into account the identification, support and responsibilities of representatives is being formulated by College at present.

PREMISES

At this stage in the general economic downturn, where property value has slumped, we are relieved not to have purchased alternative premises to Lincoln Place. However, with the expansion of activities at central level for the College the requirement of additional space remains an issue. One solution to overcome this shortfall would be re-configuring the internal space within the premises at Lincoln Place and adding an additional story to the building. Work towards the feasibility and planning process associated with this proposal is at an advanced stage at present.

THE ICGP WEBSITE

There has been further improvement and development of the College website (www.icgp.ie) during the year and this remains a tremendously valuable resource for members and the public. Broadly speaking, it is an asset that is probably very underutilised by the membership considering the wealth of useful information and links available.

One of the main features which have been upgraded is the “Find a GP” area (www.icgp.ie/findagp) which now has the facility for members to advertise more information about themselves and their practice in a location which has open public access.

NETWORK OF ESTABLISHING GPS (NEGS)

The Network of Establishing GPs is a programme set up by the College in 2004 to address some of the needs and issues of doctors working in general practice who were not fully established in their practices/careers. To date this has been a most valuable exercise particularly for younger GPs who have found support and a vehicle for enhanced communication and the development of links with their more established and experienced colleagues.

One of the more practical developments which have been devised is the ‘ICGP classifieds’ (www.icgp.ie/classifieds). This is a facility whereby GPs seeking a position with long-term prospects or a GP thinking of retiring or expanding who has a potential position may advertise on this section of the College website.

Valuable information has been gleaned from a national survey of Establishing GPs which will inform future planning for the project and work towards the establishment of a ‘GP Mentor Network’ is ongoing.

From the outset of the NEGS programme participation was available to all doctors who did not see themselves as being fully established in general practice, but from now on it was seen as reasonable to confine this facility to College members given the significant resources that have been devoted to the project.

It is also timely to consider the point at which the umbilical cord should be cut and define a point when doctors should no longer be participating in the NEGs programme. The challenge as to how best to integrate these ‘NEGs graduates’ into College activities, particularly at a local level, will require some consideration.

The NEGS discussion board which is hosted on the College website is very popular and is highly valued by participants. There is a plausible case for opening a similar discussion board for the general membership but care needs to be taken that there is no embarrassment caused to College through inappropriate or mischievous postings on the site.

APPOINTMENTS

Key positions at a central level in the College have and will become vacant in the not too distant future. Dr Michael Boland has retired as Director of the Postgraduate Resource Centre and Fionán Ó'Cuinneagáin has also indicated his intention to retire. For many reasons the filling of these vacancies poses a significant challenge for the ICGP and also gives an opportunity to review our internal organisation. It has been decided to establish three positions to best fulfil the requirements of College into the future:

- Chief Executive
- Director of Quality and Standards
- Chief Operating Officer

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ICGP continues to grow and the quantity and quality of work done on behalf of general practice and the public at large has escalated. So many people work for or on behalf of the College at many levels, both centrally and throughout the country, that it would not be practical to mention them all individually. We are all enriched by their contribution and dedication which is much appreciated. I have been struck, but not surprised, by the willingness of members to give of their time and expertise when approached as individuals – this has certainly facilitated my role as Chairman of College.

I am most appreciative and grateful for the loyalty and support of the members of the Executive throughout my term of office. Their individual reports will outline the achievements and developments in their areas of responsibility and are a reflection of their diligence and dedication to the task at hand.

The work of the various Programme and Project Directors has also been enormous and makes a significant contribution to the impact of the ICGP. I am personally grateful for their advice and willing contribution, often far beyond the brief of their strict area of responsibility.

Central to all that happens at the ICGP is the energy, enthusiasm and vision of our Chief Executive, Fionán Ó'Cuinneagáin. In trying to describe the respect with which he is held both within and without College my mind keeps coming back to the poem *The Village Schoolmaster* by Goldsmith - “..... and still the wonder grew, That one small head could carry all he knew”. We are indeed most fortunate.

I must thank my partners, colleagues and patients at North Gate Medical Centre in New Ross for their understanding and flexibility when I have been away from the practice attending to my responsibilities as Chairman. Lastly I would like to thank my wife Ruthie who with Bronagh, Marcus and Cillian sustain me with their enduring love, support and affirmation.

Honorary Treasurer's Report

AUTHOR | DR ABDUL BULBULIA, HONORARY TREASURER

It gives me great pleasure as Treasurer of the Irish College of General Practitioners, to present my report and the financial statements for the year ended 31st December 2009. The accounts for the year ended 31st December, 2009 show a deficit of €149,241 compared to 2008 which showed an operating profit of €87,000. Whereas income shows an increase of €149k, expenditure increased by €380k. This is reflective of a slight downturn in course uptake and external grants.

The main source of income for the College is the annual subscription which showed an increase of €200,000. However, the amount of outstanding subscriptions still remains very high at €400,000. College courses and conferences showed a reduction of €80k 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. An important and very successful programme is the Network of Establishing GPs which again included the running of a very successful national conference, regional meetings and a very active and interesting discussion board on the College website.

The College Executive has reviewed the accounts in the context of the current economic environment and has implemented a series of cost reductions including staff salaries which should result in a more favourable result being reported next year.

Looking to the future, the cost of the possible introduction of Mandatory Professional Competence, the ever increasing demand for new services and information will have to be tempered accordingly. I would like to thank Mr Fionan O'Cuinneagain, Chief Executive for his careful and dedicated stewardship of the Irish College of General Practitioners.

I would also like to thank my fellow Finance Committee Members and our Accountants and Auditors for their whole hearted engagement.

My sincere appreciation goes to our President Dr Liam Lacey and the Chairman Dr Mark Walsh.

The abbreviated accounts are attached. Full accounts may be had on request.

The Irish College of General Practitioners Limited
Profit and loss account (Statement of financial activities) for the year ended 31st December 2009

		Continuing operations	
	Note	2009	2008
Income		€	
Subscriptions received		2,041,230	1,849,974
Course income and fees		1,060,502	1,000,467
MICGP Examination		301,090	254,264
Conferences		391,284	523,295
Grants: HSE METR (previously Post Graduate Medical & Dental Board)		153,500	107,226
Sundry income		112,405	115,712
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	2	4,060,011	3,850,938
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Expenditure			
Establishment		274,282	157,175
Administration		2,205,164	1,876,209
Programmes		305,756	331,162
Communications, publications, library and related services		210,743	229,016
Courses		838,596	710,733
Conferences		331,946	392,516
Financial	4	47,108	73,511
		-----	-----
		4,213,595	3,770,322
		-----	-----
Operating result for the year		(153,584)	80,616
Interest receivable and similar income	5	4,343	6,671
		-----	-----
Results on ordinary activities before taxation		(149,241)	87,287
Tax on ordinary activities		-	-
		-----	-----
Retained result for the year		(149,241)	87,287
Retained reserves brought forward		811,347	724,060
		-----	-----
Retained reserves carried forward		662,106	811,347
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There are no recognised gains or losses other than the profit or loss for the above two financial years.
The financial statements were approved by the board on 17th April 2010 and signed on its behalf by

Dr Abdul Bulbulia

Dr Thomas Mark Walsh