

Special Committee on Continuing Medical Education

David Tait

The idea for this committee of Council came from Professor Andrew Sims when President of the College. A Working Group of the Education Committee produced a report on continuing medical education (CME) and the first meeting was held in February 1992 under the chairmanship of Dr Fiona Caldicott, then Dean. Following her election to the Presidency in 1993 Professor Sims took on the chairmanship and the committee has now met ten times to date.

Much information has been gathered from outside the College including scrutiny of CME and accreditation in North America, in Australia and New Zealand, from dialogue with other colleges in the United Kingdom and from formal contact through the Conference of Medical Royal Colleges and their Faculties which issued a Declaration of Principles surrounding CME in 1993. Further data on study leave uptake was obtained through the Standing Committee on Postgraduate Medical Education which surveyed consultants in all specialties in 15 districts in England, together with surveys undertaken by the Scottish Division and in Oxford.

Extensive consultation has taken place within the College through the Divisional, Specialist Section and Group structures and a random survey of 10% of consultants has been undertaken, enquiring into current use of study leave and views on CME and accreditation. Discussion has also taken place with the Department of Health, Postgraduate Deans and the BMA.

The committee now feels confident that whatever proposals go to Council in due course they will be acceptable to the membership and appropriate in the broader medico-political context.

A number of themes have been pursued vigorously, particularly resources in which cost in time and finance of CME is quantified so that employers (trusts) and departments will be clear about the investment required for professional development.

A new journal on CME under the editorship of Professor Andrew Sims is to be launched and a CME Department within the College has been forged. The Special Committee has formed strong links with the Programmes and Meetings Committee and the Steering Group on Courses with a view to the provision of CME within College meetings and the selection and monitoring of 'stand-alone' courses. The place of sponsorship and the use of new technology, for example satellite teleconferencing, have also been considered. A major topic for the committee is what College structure should be introduced to support CME in the way that the psychiatric tutors system supports general professional training and specialty tutors support higher professional training.

The committee continues to meet quarterly and the Chairman would be pleased to hear from members with particular views on CME.

Present membership

Professor Andrew Sims (Chairman), Professor Sydney Brandon, Dr Fiona Caldicott (President), Professor John Cox (Dean), Dr Mike Harris, Dr Jim Higgins, Dr Rachel Jenkins, Professor Cornelius Katona, Dr Peter Maddocks, Dr Keith Rix, Dr Tom Sensky, Dr David Storer, Dr David Tait, Dr Raymond Travers and Professor Greg Wilkinson (Editor).

In attendance from the College

Mrs Vanessa Cameron (Secretary), Mrs Jean Wales (CME Officer), Mr Nick Grundy (Committee Officer), Mrs Annabel Thomas (Courses & Conferences Officer), and Mr Dave Jago (Publications Manager).

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