

CLINICAL ACADEMIA IN CRISIS?

Strictly embargoed until 00.01am 24 May 2004

CHMS and CDDS Survey of Clinical Academic Numbers in UK Medical and Dental Schools

Data published today by the Council of Heads of Medical Schools (CHMS) and the Council of Deans of Dental Schools (CDDS) show there has been a 15% decrease in the numbers of clinical academic staff in the UK Medical and Dental Schools, more than 500 fewer than in 2001. Academic Dentistry is already operating at the lowest staffing levels for more than a decade and there is an obvious need for increased dental student numbers. Academic Medicine has seen an unprecedented 40% increase in medical student numbers whilst simultaneously suffering a 14% decrease in staffing levels.

The shortages are particularly critical in numbers of junior staff; there has been a 30% decline in the number of clinical lecturers in medicine and dentistry. Support for these individuals is critical to ensure a strong future for clinical academia, and to ensure that the UK continues to engage in the highest quality clinical research and teaching at national and international levels. The nation needs top quality academic clinicians in all disciplines yet young doctors and dentists do not perceive academic careers as attractive. Significant numbers are continuing to leave clinical academia and without redressing this problem some specialties will face academic extinction in the next decade. This is paradoxical in light of the Government's evident support for clinical research with a significant budget settlement and the new UK Clinical Research Collaboration.

Both Councils welcome the Government's commitment to parity in funding the new consultant contract for clinical academics, and it is hoped that this will help make academic medicine and dentistry a more attractive career option. We must ensure that the more than 200 vacant professorial and reader/senior lecturer posts are filled.

CHMS and CDDS therefore recommend in today's report:

- A fully funded increase of at least 10% in clinical academic numbers
- Adequacy, consistency and stability in all the relevant funding streams
- Recognition of teaching and research in performance measures for NHS and Foundation Trusts
- Academic experience should be recognised, rewarded and funded as part of the postgraduate structure
- Additional training numbers for academic posts
- An emergency capital injection into UK dental schools
- Instigation of an annual data collection exercise

ENDS

Notes:

1. The Council of Heads of Medical Schools (CHMS) is the authoritative voice of the Deans/Heads of the 29 University Medical Schools across the United Kingdom. The Council is currently chaired by Professor David Gordon, of the University of Manchester.

The Council of Deans of Dental Schools (CDDS) represents the 15 Deans/Heads of the University Dental Schools across the United Kingdom. The Council is currently chaired by Professor Paul Wright of Bart's and the London Queen Mary's School of Medicine and Dentistry

2. Further details or copies of the survey by contacting the secretariat

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