

Chair
Professor David Gordon
MA FRCP FMedSci

Executive Director
Dr Katie Petty-Saphon



Session 2004-05
20 January 2004

Parliamentary Briefing

House of Lords Starred Question: Academic Medicine

Event

Thursday 20 January, House of Lords Starred Question, 11.30am

Starred Question

*The Earl Howe—To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their response to the recent statement in the *BMA News* on the present state of academic medicine

Possible Supplementary Question

- Would the Government consider recognising teaching and research in the performance measures of NHS and Foundation Trusts?

Background

University Hospitals are committed to their tripartite mission of excellence in service delivery, teaching and research. In a world of increasing pressure to deliver service targets it is vital that time for teaching and for research is protected. It is suggested that inclusion of teaching and research in performance targets being developed by the Healthcare Commission could be an effective way forward.

Data published in May 2004 by the Council of Heads of Medical Schools (CHMS) with the Council of Deans of Dental Schools (CDDS) showed that there has been a 15% decrease in the numbers of clinical academic staff in the UK Medical and Dental Schools, representing more than 500 fewer staff than in 2001. Academic Medicine has seen an unprecedented 40% increase in medical student numbers whilst simultaneously suffering a 14% decrease in staffing level. Academic Dentistry is already operating at the lowest staffing levels for more than a decade, which challenges the forthcoming expansion in dental student numbers. A further data update will be published in May 2005.

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 and young doctors and dentists need to perceive academic careers as attractive. The Government's evident support for clinical research with a significant budget settlement and the UK Clinical Research Collaboration is a welcome development.

CHMS and CDDS are pleased that a group has been set up to devise practical methods of implementing the recommendations from the Academic Sub-Group of the UKCRC. A first step will be to develop dedicated academic training programmes well supported by external grants.

The Government's commitment to parity in funding the new consultant contract for clinical academics was critical, and it is hoped that this will also 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.

Data from the CHMS survey clearly indicates that a number of clinical specialities, notably pathology, psychiatry, anaesthesia and public health medicine are under considerable threat. This is particularly concerning in the light of the current Government priorities placed on Mental Health and Public Health following the publication of the Wanless report. Medical Schools are working hard to protect these specialities however Schools face significant problems in recruiting to these posts.

The Council of Heads of Medical Schools (CHMS) is the authoritative voice of the Deans/Heads of the 31 University Medical Schools across the United Kingdom. The Council is currently chaired by Professor David Gordon, of the University of Manchester.

References:

Silke, A (2004) *Clinical Academic Staffing Levels in UK Medical and Dental Schools*, The Council of Heads of Medical Schools and the Council of Deans of Dental Schools, London.

For further information, please contact Aideen Silke on 020 7419 5494 or aideen.silke@chms.ac.uk