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Press Release

Embargoed until after 15 January House of Lords PQ

In the House of Lords on Thursday, Lord Roberts of Conwy asked how many Professorial vacancies there are in UK Medical Schools?

The answer is – at least 84.

Even more worrying is the 23% reduction in junior staff in the last 3 years

So – *where are the Professors of the future?*

*Is action **really** being taken to ensure parity between academic and NHS consultants?*

By 2005 there will have been an unprecedented 40% increase in the number of medical students. This has put staff in Medical Schools under significant pressure as they strive:

- to ensure fair access
- to maintain and improve the quality of teaching and learning
- to foster and enhance a research rich environment.

Tomorrow's doctors must be educated to question everything; to draw together information from diverse sources and to structure it to come to accurate diagnoses on which all members of the team can act appropriately to the benefit of patients.

Developments in the curriculum, improved use of IT, heightened focus on communication, team-building and appropriate use of different professional skills have ensured that the quality of medical education has continued to rise despite the pressure on staff time. Deep concerns remain that significant numbers of staff, in particular at the junior levels, are leaving universities for the NHS. This threatens the future provision of medical education and much more needs to be done to create an environment in which staff will wish to remain. Clinical Academics need to be confident that they will be given the resources

- to continue their research (to the benefit of patients, students and the economy)
- to develop and deliver ever-improved teaching programmes and
- to continue to treat patients.

The Council of Heads of Medical Schools' Survey, first undertaken in 2000 was repeated in 2003. The full analysis will be available within the next 2 months. However, the key changes on which one can comment at present are:

	2003	2000	Change
NUMBER OF PROFESSORS	1110	1042	+6%
Number of Readers/Snr Lecturers	1505	1663	-10%
Number of Lecturers	571	844	-33%
Number of Researchers	1170	1414	-18%
Total	4356	4963	-12%
Vacant Professorial posts	84	73	+14%
Vacant Reader/Snr lecturer posts	109	118	-8%

{These vacancy figures are an under-estimate. Financial constraints have forced many universities to withdraw previously established posts in academic medicine. The figures above represent posts the universities are intending to retain.}

In this context it becomes ever more vital that the Government fulfils its undertaking to ensure parity between clinical academic and NHS consultants posts. CHMS is actively working to ensure that the new Consultant Contract is implemented in such a way as to make Clinical Academia an attractive career option and to ensure that the future health of the Nation is not compromised.

For more information, or to request a copy of the full Survey when it is available, please contact

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