Board of science chair’s message

Welcome to the March 2015 edition of the friends of the board of science bulletin.

In this edition you can find out about some key successes that will help protect children from the harms of smoking, the latest on e-cigarettes, and our work on antimicrobial resistance. There is also a look back at the annual BMA research grants awards ceremony which took place in November 2014.

If you would like more information about our work or to get involved, please email me by clicking here.

Focus on: Antimicrobial resistance

Doctors are increasingly concerned that current antimicrobials will become ineffective due to rising levels of resistance. This not only represents a major public health issue, but has the potential to severely limit the effectiveness of many routine and complex medical treatments.

With repeated warnings of a ‘post-antimicrobial age’, the board has been looking at what actions are needed to reduce the emergence and spread of resistance. These include:

– Reducing the inappropriate use of antimicrobials in modern farming
– Facilitating the development of new antimicrobials
– Encouraging international cooperation on tackling antimicrobial resistance
– Ambitious targets to improving public awareness of antimicrobial resistance
– Promoting and supporting good medical practice through better education and training; greater adherence to national evidence-based prescribing guidance; improved local microbiology services and diagnostics; improved information sharing; investment and resources to support GP prescribing; the use of ‘antimicrobial champions’ in hospitals; and evidence-based infection control practices.

Keep a look out for the board’s briefing paper that will be published in the next few weeks.

Welcome progress on tobacco control

The BMA has strongly welcomed the government’s decision to ban smoking in cars with under 18s present (from 1st October 2015), and its intention to introduce standard packaging for tobacco products (from 20th May 2016). Doctors have long supported these measures as effective ways to improve the protection of children and young people from tobacco harm.

E-cigarettes: miracle or menace?

With so much attention on the emergence of e-cigarettes we have been listening to your concerns about what impact they may have on renormalising smoking, and what benefit they may have to public health. You can find out why we think they need to be better regulated in our updated e-cigarette briefing paper.
Celebrating success and promoting medical research: 
2014 BMA research grants award ceremony

Each year, with the support of the board of science, the BMA awards ten research grants totalling around £500,000 to fund medical research. The grants are fully funded by donations and legacies left to the BMA.

The BMA hosts an annual award ceremony to recognise the success of the research grant winners, and to raise the profile of this important work. The event serves to showcase the impact that the research grants, and the wider BMA, have on medical research in the UK.

The 2014 BMA research grants award ceremony took place in November 2014 at BMA house with guests invited to a black-tie dinner, prize-giving ceremony, presentations from past grant winners, and a keynote speech from elite soldier, athlete, mountaineer and explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes OBE.

I thought the BMA were a wonderful bunch of people doing a truly great job of funding extremely worthwhile projects. The team did an incredible job to showcase the work of the BMA.

Sir Ranulph Fiennes

I was so impressed by the variety and context of proposed research programmes. It was also really great to see so many women and such ethnic diversity amongst the winning submissions.

The Rt. Hon. the Baroness Dean of Thornton-le-Fylde

More photos from the November 2014 award ceremony can be viewed on our Flickr page, and more information on this year’s research grant winners can be found here.

For regular updates of the BMA research grants, please follow the link to the online BMA medical research community site.

Past award winner, Dr Helen Fisher, talking about the importance of supporting young researchers at the beginning of their careers.

Dr Sana Usman who was the recipient of the 2014 Helen H Lawson research grant.