Statement on the recognition of GPs as specialists

In August 2016, the British Medical Association and Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) published a joint statement calling for the recognition of general practitioners as specialists in the UK.

Since the publication of our joint statement we have welcomed the acknowledgement from the General Medical Council (GMC) of the huge and vital contribution GPs make to healthcare in the UK by providing expert care and treatment to millions of patients every year – and that it would positively consider a request from all four UK governments to explore expanding the specialist register to include general practice.

We also acknowledge the support of the Medical Schools Council (MSC) and Health Education England, through their November 2016 publication ‘By choice – not by chance’, for the formal recognition of GPs as specialists and the establishment of a single GMC register. General practice is facing an ongoing workforce crisis, yet it’s clear that the lack of formal recognition of general practice as a specialty is holding back medical students and junior doctors from pursuing a career as GPs. A recent publication by RCGP and MSC – Destination GP – provided further evidence that during their training, medical students are experiencing denigration about general practice as a career from a wide range of sources. Formal recognition of general practice as a specialty would help to counter misconceptions being spread about the specialist nature of the GP role.

GPs are expert medical generalists who must be valued as such. We therefore call upon the four UK health departments, working with the GMC, to bring forward legislative proposals to the UK Parliament to update the Medical Act to recognise general practitioners as specialists and grant them parity of esteem with senior doctors in other branches of medical practice.

As we work to bring about change at a UK level we will also continue to fully support our European colleagues in UEMO (the European Union of General Practitioners/Family Physicians) in their ongoing pursuit to secure recognition through amendments to European legislation.

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