Patient liaison group – ARM report 2021

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**Chair, Patient liaison group**

**The Patient Liaison Group**

The [Patient liaison group (PLG)](https://www.bma.org.uk/what-we-do/committees/patient-liaison-group/patient-liaison-group)is an internal reference group providing the BMA with an informed, independent patient/public perspective on matters of interest to the medical profession and to patients/public.

PLG’s governance and identity

This session we have undergone the governance process of standardisation of our terms of reference, aligning them with the evolving role of PLG within the BMA. Our core priorities have been improving membership diversity, creating a more inclusive culture within the group, and embedding our commitment to better address health and social inequity across all our work. Raising awareness within the BMA of the determinants that influence health status, access to services, and patient/public engagement with healthcare teams, services and systems have become central to our function and identity. The BMA’s committee equalities champion scheme and our equalities champion have been integral to this work.

In terms of our identity, we recognise that increasingly our work has involved representing public as well as ‘patient’ perspectives. We welcome this shift and will continue to reflect on it in relation to our membership diversity and role and function within the BMA.

PLG workstreams and pan BMA policy work

Over the session, as a group, we have produced over 20 position statements in response to both patient/public priorities from PLG workstreams as well as BMA priorities. We have welcomed the early, meaningful engagement by BMA members, policy teams and committees with PLG on consultations, policy areas, and task and finish groups. We have contributed to, for example, the BMA’s work on health inequities, weekly Covid calls, the health and care bill working group, workforce strategy roundtables, patient information awards, clinical excellence awards, the care home working group, advanced care planning working group, GPDPR etc.

Building relationships with patient groups and stakeholders

In order to improve representation of patient/public experiences within the BMA, this session we have increased our engagement with external patient/public stakeholders. We held our first international joint meeting with the Patient Voices Group at the Canadian Medical Association. We have commenced attending monthly National Voices policy meetings and engaged further with the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges patient groups, including being invited to present the work of PLG. We have also had meetings with, for example, the RCoG, the RCoA, the Patients Association, NAPP, the Patient Experience Library, the Patient Information Forum and Healthwatch, and organised informal public Q & As on issues relating to Covid.

PLG Symposium – access to services

Our annual symposium focussed on improving access to health and social care services as a route to reducing health inequity. We believe adopting a wide interpretation of the term ‘access’ is critical for meaningful debate and progress. Prior to the event we circulated a briefing paper exploring this, as well as providing a summary of relevant BMA policy work on access to services, and health and social equity.

The symposium explored equitable access to digital services; the need to overcome the digital divide and ensure that all people have the skills, tools, knowledge, and confidence to use digital technologies. Access to social prescribing and service integration as a route to improving health and wellbeing within communities was also discussed. In addition, the symposium focussed on the lived experiences of individuals denied equitable access to care, services and treatment across maternity, mental health and transgender healthcare settings, as well as when transitioning from paediatrics to adult care.

BMA PLG Patient information awards

In recognition of the increasing role played by PLG, this session the annual [BMA Patient information awards](https://www.bma.org.uk/about-us/corporate-social-environmental-responsibility/bma-awards/plg-patient-information-awards) were renamed the BMA PLG Patient information awards. The [Awards](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYlvIV0gTB8) recognise the importance of [high quality, accessible and well-designed patient information](https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/improving-patient-information-the-importance-of-collaboration) in providing patient care. As a group we continue to promote the role of co-production i.e. the bringing together of experiential knowledge and priorities with medical and healthcare knowledge and priorities, and cultural, social and accessibility insights, in designing, delivering and evaluating patient information.

Patient empowerment and self care

PLG is responsible for commissioning work pan BMA to highlight the need of self care. Organised by the Self Care Forum, Self Care Week is an annual awareness week that provides a focus for self care events and activities across the country. PLG promotes the Forum on social media and commissions blogs to illustrate different aspects of self care. Among others, this session, CC member Dr Helen Fidler blogged about [preparing a strategy for harder times in a your medical career](https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/how-to-handle-working-in-the-nhs) and MSC member Marina Politis blogged about the [breadth of self care](https://www.bma.org.uk/news-and-opinion/self-care-is-more-than-bubble-baths). In PLG’s position statement on self care we highlight that we need to rigorously and non-judgementally look at self care through an equities lens.

Looking forward we want to:

* Monitor the impact of changes to our terms of reference
* Continue to improve PLG diversity and inclusion
* Review our strategic planning to provide further value, information, knowledge and experiential evidence across the BMA’s work
* Specifically, explore developing a pan BMA PLG bulletin, make our position statements more accessible, improve community engagement, and do more targeted work that focusses on the lived experiences of minoritised groups in healthcare contexts

Want to find out more?

* Please email: info.plg@bma.org.uk