Retired members committee podcast transcript 2021

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**Retired members committee and conference chair**

Introduction

This has been my second year as committee chair and obviously its been heavily impacted by the covid pandemic.

Retired members conference

Last year, when the pandemic was in its very early stages, I had to take the difficult decision to cancel our annual conference. I’m pleased to say that this year we were able to have a virtual conference. In addition to thanking the staff and all the participants, I would like to thank Harry Burns, BMA President, for a thought-provoking speech about health inequalities and also Chand Nagpaul, chair of council, for updating members on the BMA’s work throughout the pandemic and beyond.

Our conference debated important motions and I’m pleased to say that several of these appear on this year’s ARM agenda. Our conference elected 19 members to attend the virtual ARM – so we have good representation.

Pandemic retired returners

In December last year, we surveyed a sample of retired members who had returned to medical practice. What we learned was generally very encouraging. Three quarters of respondants were able to work their preferred number of hours with very few working full-time. Unlike other members of the workforce, the majority did not report concerns about their mental health due to their return to work.

However, there were many reports of bureaucratic difficulties in returning to work. BMA staff in the public health and healthcare team, led by Lena Levy, Robert Kidney and Alex Ottley, have been working with NHS organisations and others to tackle these issues. They have also been considering how retired doctors can help the NHS with its backlog.

As a retired public health doctor and chair of the retired members committee, I have been well positioned to work with BMA staff and teams on these and other Covid 19 issues. This work will no doubt continue as the pandemic progresses. I would urge members to take advantage of the excellent guidance provided on the [BMA website](https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/covid-19/returning-to-the-nhs-or-starting-a-new-role/covid-19-retired-doctors-returning-to-work).

Retired members committee

The creation of the retired members committee in 2018 gave retired members appropriate recognition as a branch of practice. We now have 11,500 retired members, up nearly 10% since 2016. Retired members now represent approximately 7% of the total BMA membership – a significant proportion.

The title ‘branch of practice’ may seem somewhat incongruous, when the members are retired, but it is this recognition that gives us the ability to play a full and meaningful role in the activities of the BMA. We are now well placed to raise the profile of retired members in our association.

Our committee now sends an observer to the BMA pensions committee and we also have members on the BAME forum and the Mental Health Group. Thank you to our members for taking on these roles. Pensions are obviously of interest to retired doctors and this year the BMA provided important pension information to retired members some of whom may be entitled to an increased pension as a result of the McCloud pension judgement.

Behind the scenes we have worked with the organisation committee to seek changes to our standing orders to enable the committee to elect its own officers instead of inheriting them from our conference. We are also seeking to improve the definition of a retired member to better reflect that retirement does not always mean the complete cessation of all medical related activity.

Next steps

The retired members committee has an active programme of work. I’ll give you some examples:

* With the BMA workforce team, we are working with the GMC and NHS to ensure that lessons are learnt from the first ‘return to work’, and also looking at how retired doctors could help the NHS catch up with its considerable backlog. Retired doctors may also have a role in medical education when demand for educators is high with increasing numbers of medical students and interruptions to training due to the pandemic.
* Retired members lunches have been limited during the pandemic and we would like to introduce a schedule of retired member symposia with interesting speakers and good opportunities for retired doctors to keep in touch.
* Doctors with 50 years of BMA membership are entitled to free membership and we hope to find additional ways to celebrate this life membership.
* We are continuing to explore how retired members can contribute to encouraging and supporting young people from diverse backgrounds in applying for places at medical school.
* Importantly we a continually looking for ways to maintain and expand retired membership through providing services and experiences that retired doctors value.

Conclusion and thanks

To finish, firstly the thank you’s.

To Laura Clark, Bharti Patel and Sally-Ann Cole in the secretariat for their work and guidance during the year. Also, to members of our committee who have worked well together resulting in constructive discussions and decisions. Finally, and not least to my deputy, Stephen Millar. He has provided me with excellent support during the year and has done a considerable amount of work on our behalf, with the organisation committee. I’m delighted that Stephen has been elected as chair of our conference for the next 2 sessions.

A message to everybody please - retiring from work gives new opportunities to contribute to BMA activity, whether at division, regional or national level. I would encourage any retired member interested in becoming more involved to get in touch.

Thank you for taking the trouble to listen to this recording or read the text.