

THE FACULTY OF PHARMACEUTICAL MEDICINE

NEWSLETTER
December 2010



The Membership Survey: Learning and looking forward

Why the Faculty has undertaken a survey of its membership

Dr Keith Bragman FFPM, Chair of the FPM Advocacy Committee

I am extremely pleased to introduce the last Faculty newsletter of 2010. As the Chair of the Advocacy Committee I am very grateful for the support of my colleagues over the last year. The Advocacy Committee exists to do exactly as its title suggests. We are focused on promoting pharmaceutical medicine as an exciting speciality and a means to improving patient and public health. Advocacy also includes addressing the needs of the membership and looking outward to our partners, associations representing the interests of the patient and the public. I anticipate that the latter will become increasingly important as the Faculty becomes better known. Much has been achieved in recent years and pharmaceutical medicine is no longer in its infancy. The Faculty plays an increasingly relevant role in medical education, planning revalidation and healthcare policy. However we should not be resting on our laurels and the Faculty is increasingly challenged to take a more public stance on the issues of the day.



This year was the 20th anniversary of the Faculty and it seemed a good idea not just to reflect upon past achievements but to focus on future activities. With this in mind we canvassed the membership to better understand your wishes and to validate our plans for future activities. We wanted to better understand your expectations and learn more about which services were considered of value or in need of improvement. I would like to thank all of you who took the time to complete the on-line survey. I am most grateful to Dr Siân Walker and Dr Neil Snowise for their work on the membership survey, the findings of which are summarised in the body of this newsletter. We have also included some of the comments that were received from members as part of the process, and in his response to the survey and concluding remarks, Dr Richard Tiner, President, describes how these issues and the overall findings from the survey have been important in informing and developing the Faculty's ongoing strategy. There have been no big surprises. However it is increasingly apparent that in a digital age and to be outward looking, the Faculty must develop and invest in a digital strategy. Furthermore with a membership in excess of 1400, we need to be able to easily communicate with our membership and the outside world.

As an initial step, we will be modernising the Faculty website in 2011. This will facilitate presentation of our activities and thoughts in a more accessible and user-friendly manner. Also the architecture of the website needs to be able to better support educational and self-learning activities. All of this will not occur overnight. However we are intent upon expanding upon current activities and stepping up the pace of change. The website will be central to this strategy. We want to be more inclusive and make it easier for the membership to participate in our activities. Over the last year an increasing number of you have joined in Faculty activities. We also need ongoing feedback from you to ensure that we continue to move in the right direction. 2011 will bring new challenges and opportunities for the Faculty. We look forward to sharing these experiences with you. ***With best wishes for the New Year, Keith Bragman.***

Survey results

Dr Liz Clark MFPM, Advocacy Committee

A Snapshot of Our Membership

The first part of the survey was concerned with understanding the demographics of our membership.

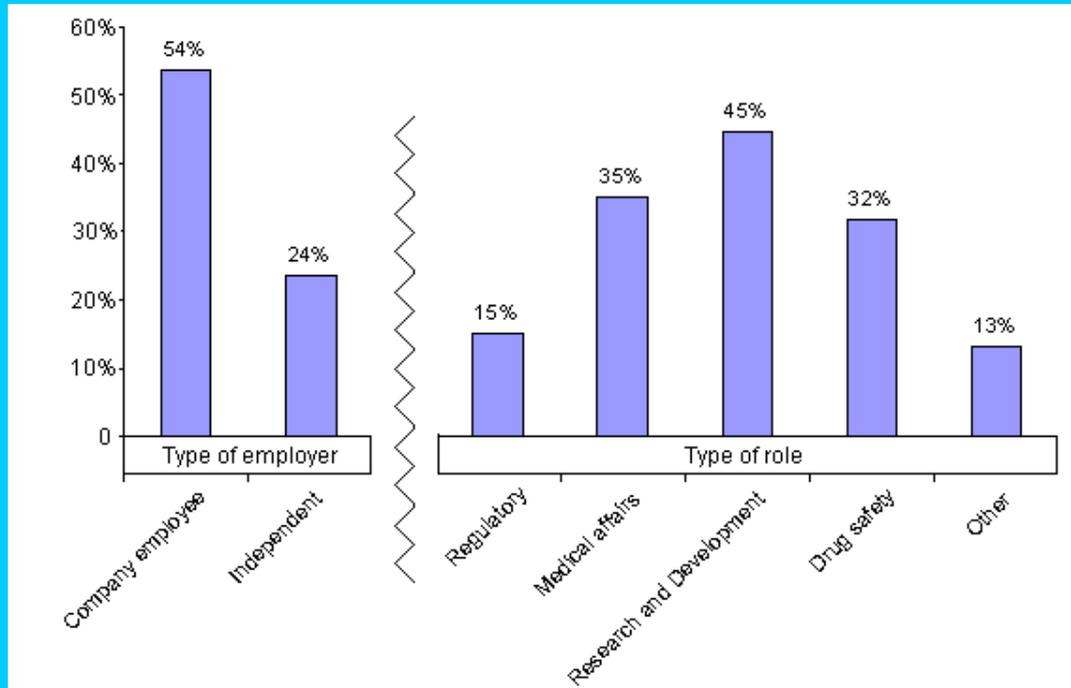
Almost a third of the membership of the Faculty responded to the survey, which was run in October and November 2009. Just over half of the respondents had been members of the Faculty for more than ten years and two-thirds were UK-based. Our overseas members were therefore well represented, with 12% of the total respondees coming from outside Europe and 18% being based in the EU. The remaining 4% had more than one base. Half of respondents were company employees (54%) and independents represented 24% of respondents (Chart 1). The remaining 22% of members are split between managers, those who work in the regulatory agencies, academics or retired members.

We asked about membership of other organisations, and the following were most frequently mentioned (number of mentions in brackets): BMA (47), GMC (23), RSM (23), MPS (17), DIA (13), MDU (12).



Members of the Faculty work in a variety of fields, and sometimes in more than one, as reflected in chart 1. The most commonly represented specialism was Research and Development (45%), with Medical Affairs (35%) and Drug Safety (32%) being the other two major areas represented followed by Regulatory (15%). However 13% of respondents did not fall into any of these categories, and had roles as diverse as general management, clinical medicine, venture capital, ethics and regulatory development, training and education. 19% of respondents are currently undertaking Higher Medical Training (HMT) or Pharmaceutical Medicine Specialist Training (PMST).

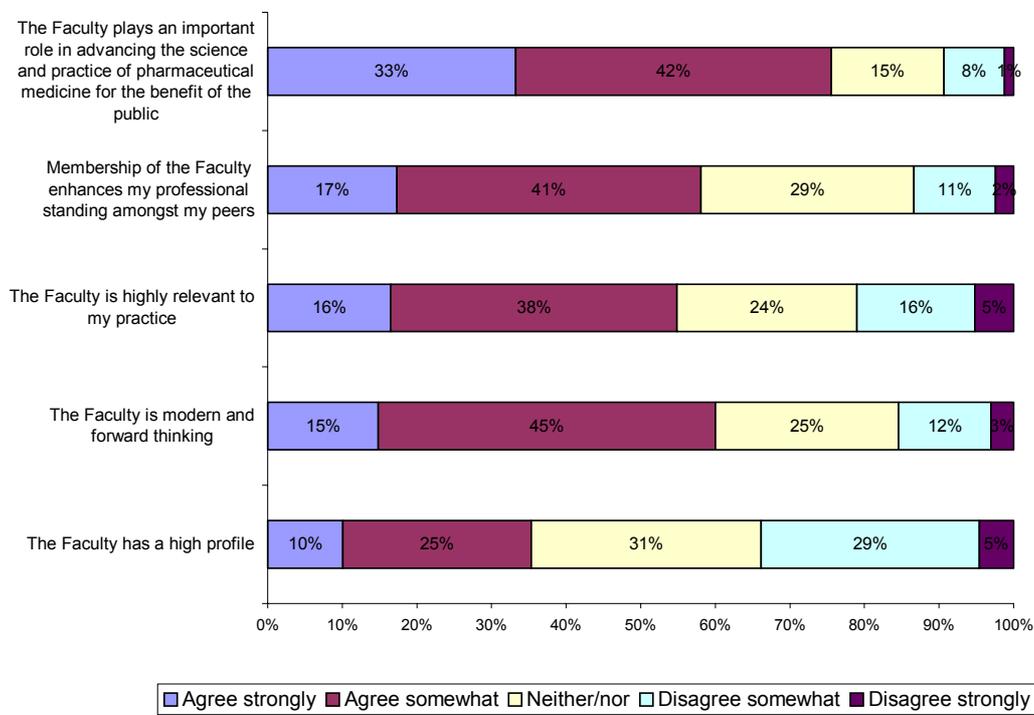
Chart 1: Employment and role type of the respondents.



The Faculty from the Inside Out and Outside In

We were interested to know how our members had initially heard about the Faculty. Not surprisingly, the most frequent way was by word of mouth, which accounted for almost half of the responses. Employers accounted for another quarter of responses, after which a variety of reasons were cited; including mailings, advertising, the RCP and the Internet. Obviously initial awareness relates to different periods of time; over 10 years ago in half of respondents, so the results must be interpreted in this context.

Chart 2:
Percentage of respondents who agreed with these statements about the Faculty.



Some specific questions relating to perceptions of the Faculty provided some interesting findings (Chart 2). Whilst members generally seem to consider that the Faculty is forward thinking, highly relevant to practice, plays an important role in advancing the science and practice of pharmaceutical medicine and enhances standing amongst peers, respondents considered that its (global) profile could be higher.

To what extent is the Faculty meeting its membership's needs?

Understanding what the membership seeks from the Faculty and the extent to which they consider the Faculty to be meeting these needs was at the heart of the survey. We attempted to do this by exploring motivation for joining, asking respondents to identify reasons for joining (multiple responses) (Chart 3), and then asking which of these was the single most important reason for joining the Faculty (Chart 4).

Chart 3: Why did you choose to become a member of the Faculty?



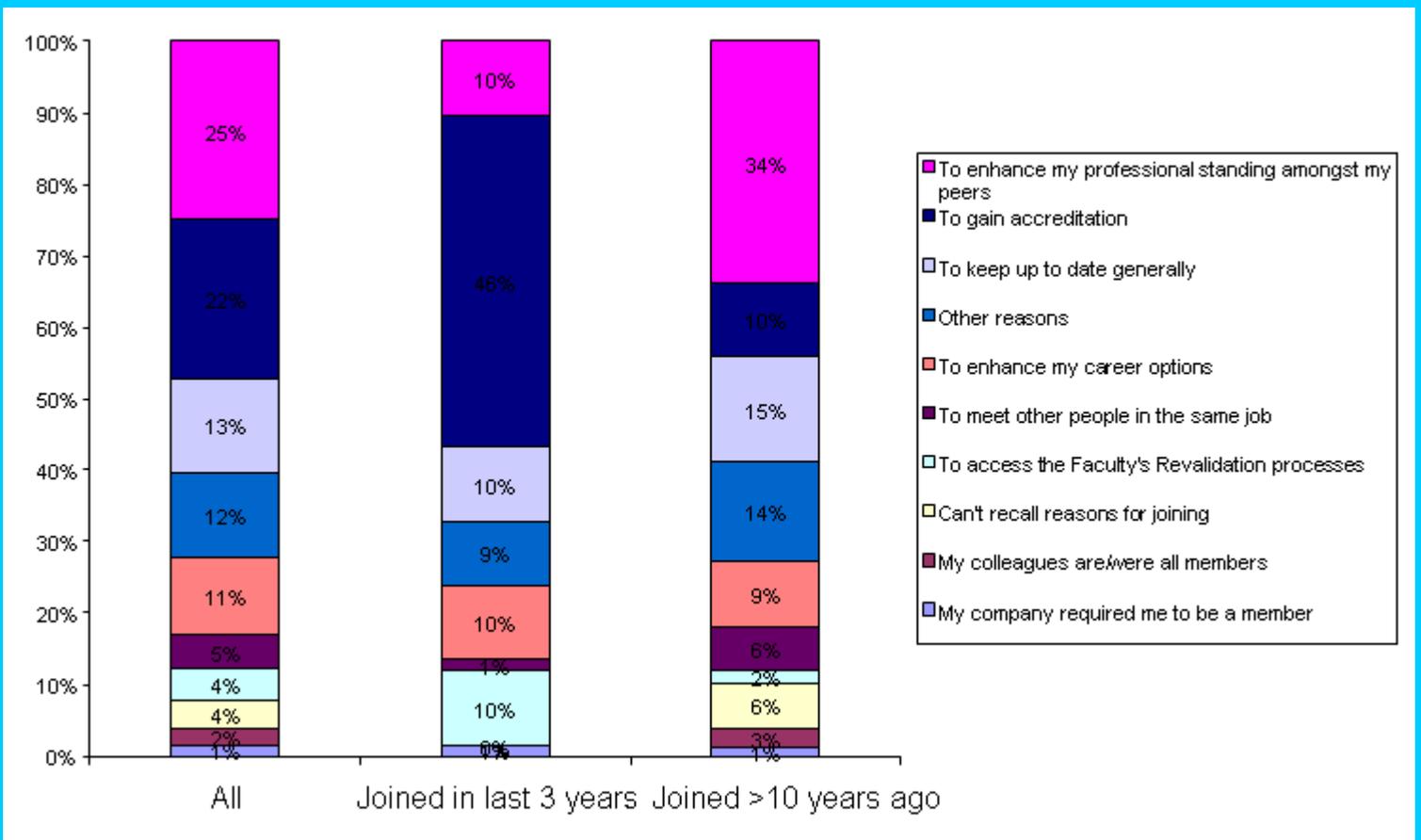


Chart 4: What was the single most important reason for joining?

In chart 4 the most important reason for initially joining the Faculty is also grouped according to how long ago members joined. It is not surprising that gaining accreditation is the single most important reason cited for members who have joined more recently; this apart, enhancing professional standing amongst peers, keeping up to date generally, and enhancing career options are the most consistent trends. Meeting other people in the same job (networking) was clearly a valued benefit of membership, if not an imperative. This question attracted considerable comment which gave further insight into members' expectations of the Faculty. The most common themes were lack of profile of the Faculty outside the UK or irrelevance due to job role or retirement.



"The Faculty, whilst providing an important educational service, needs to stay in touch with the new generation of pharmaceutical physicians who generally have different priorities and concerns."

Quote from a member

"[The Faculty should be] promoting pharmaceutical medicine as a career option in medical schools and hospitals."

We were interested to know the value of some specific Faculty activities. Chart 5 shows the responses to this question. Whilst showing that all of these activities are rated as having some use, there is almost certainly potential for improvement across all of these areas.

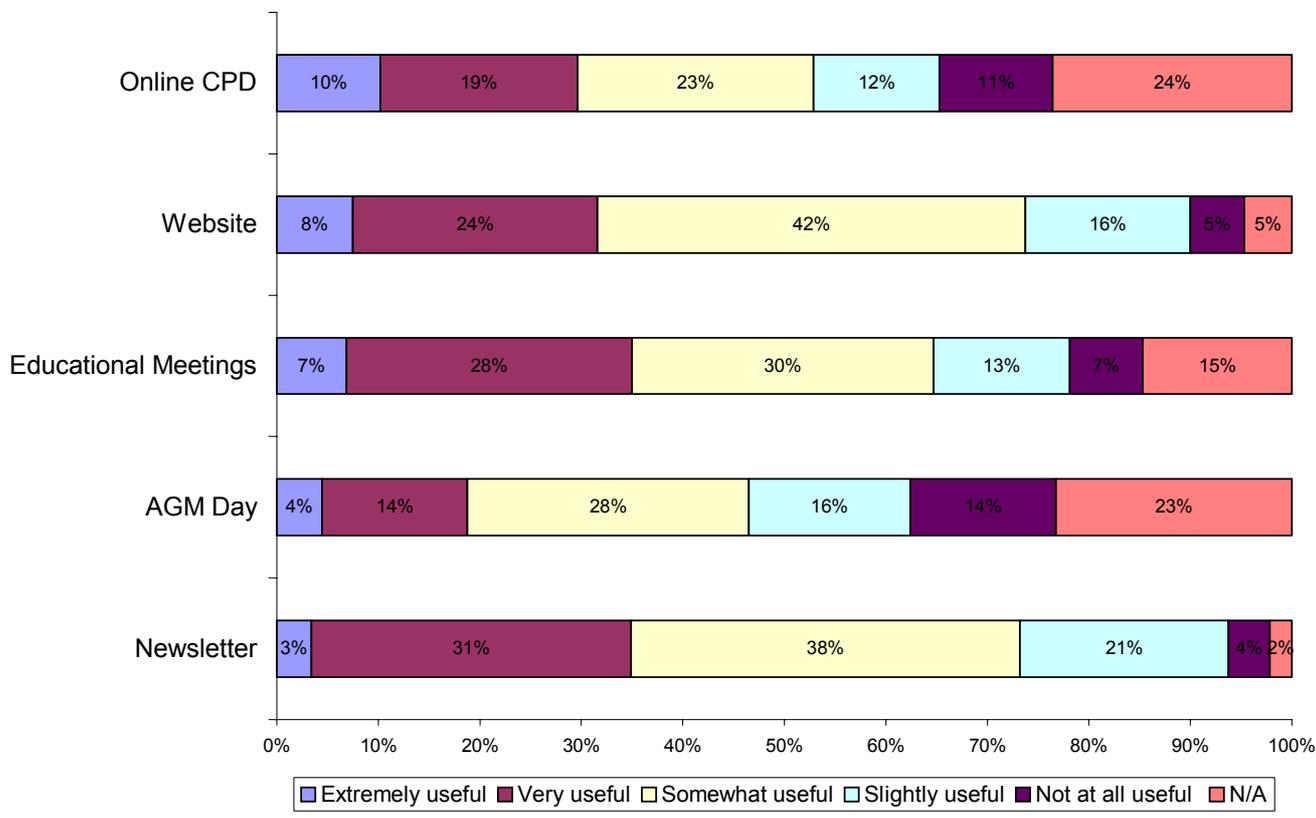


Chart 5: How useful do you find the following Faculty activities?

Given the development of electronic communication, we included a couple of specific questions to understand better how members used the website. Only one in five members visited the website monthly or more frequently, and a further third only visiting when prompted. The CPD, HMT/PMST and revalidation areas being the most frequently visited. The comments in this section supported the quantitative data that the website would benefit from modernising. A lot of members were keen to see the development of the online CPD capacity of the website.

Shaping the Future

To inform the future work of the Faculty, we asked the importance of a variety of activities, shown in Chart 6 (overleaf). Of these areas in which members wished to see an increase were a focus on revalidation, with more support, communication and increasing the practicality and relevance; online CPD and defending and enhancing the reputation of the speciality and pharmaceutical industry. There was a smaller response to the areas in which members wished to see less activity. The responses received suggested a sense of reduction of formality and bureaucracy.

"[The Faculty should] become more modern in its thinking"

"[The Faculty should increase] activities focussed on raising the profile of Pharmaceutical Medicine amongst our peers ... Challenges that will require ever increasing interactions with colleagues in the clinic and in academia."



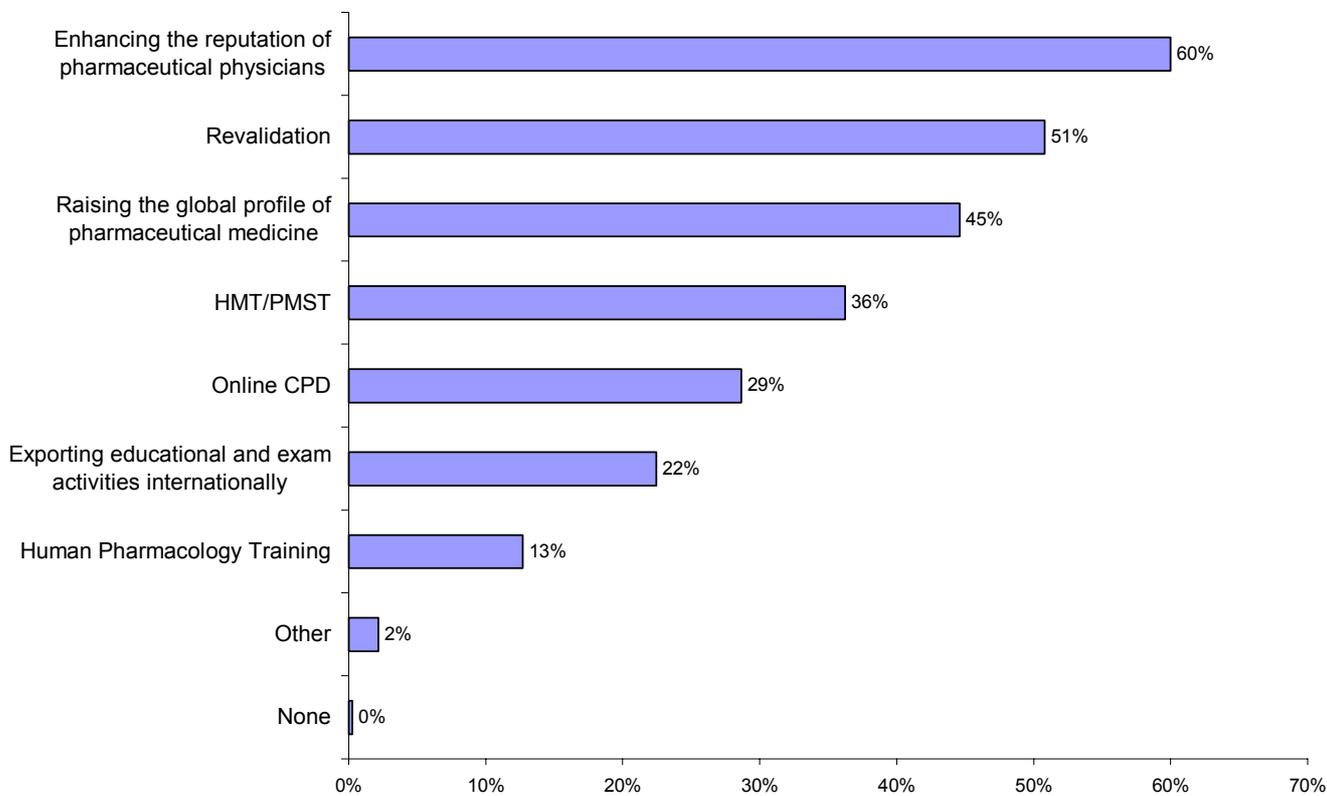


Chart 6: What do the membership respondents see as priority activities for the coming year?

The issue of UK versus global focus attracted conflicting comment. Overall, those wanting less international activity were fewer in number than those wishing to increase global reach, which given the fact that two thirds of respondents were UK-based, suggests general support for such activities.

When asked the three most important activities in which respondents would like to see the Faculty focus on in the coming year, the familiar themes of enhancing reputation of pharmaceutical physicians, and the profile of pharmaceutical medicine, revalidation, and education topped the list.

Engagement with the Faculty

A third of respondents said they had no current level of involvement with the Faculty. Responding to surveys and reviewing documents was cited by another third of respondents, with a fifth being members of committees or working parties, and 12% being educational supervisors. We asked respondents if they were interested in becoming involved with specific Faculty activities. 95 of the 370 respondents were interested in doing this; 75 weren't; 38 did not respond to the question and the remainder (162) replied as "possibly/unsure at the moment".

As reflected above, insufficient time and pressure of the day job were cited as reasons for lack of involvement. Activities which resonated with an individual's interests, such as increasing global focus, or other specific contributions were quoted as factors which would encourage involvement.

"[The faculty should] diminish the reluctance to take a visible position on relevant issues."

"More outreach toward members – it is not obvious how to participate."

In conclusion

Members of the Faculty believe that although it plays an important part on advancing the science and practice of pharmaceutical medicine, its profile could be raised to better achieve this end.

The Faculty currently provides a number of services (Online CPD, Educational Meetings, AGM Day, Newsletter) which its members find useful, but there is room for improvements in all of these areas. Specifically the website, which is the channel for much of our communication, is underutilised and could benefit from an update. This would support the intent to keep up-to-date, cited by many as a key reason for joining the Faculty.

Gaining accreditation is the single most important reason for membership among those who have joined more recently. Enhancing professional standing amongst peers and enhancing career options were other prime motivations to join the Faculty. Despite time pressures and pressure of work, a number of people are interested in contributing to Faculty activities which will advance these aspirations.

Whilst global activities received a mixed reception, there is clear interest in continuing to expand our international reach.



The Faculty's response to the membership survey

Dr Richard Tiner, President FPM

The Faculty Board were pleased with the response to the survey and felt that with almost a third of the membership responding the answers provided a good basis on which to go forward and develop the Faculty, now that it has reached its 21st birthday. The data from the survey formed a detailed discussion at the recent Strategy Day held by the Board and members of the Coordination Committee and below I outline some of the proposed future activities for the Faculty.

It is clear that members wish the Faculty to increase its profile so that it becomes better known outside its immediate membership. Moves in this direction have already been made by ensuring that it responds to important consultations such as the EC review of the Clinical Trials Directive and the English Department of Health's White Paper on the future of the NHS 'Equity and Excellence' and some of its associated papers. In the last year, the Faculty has also been invited to join a NICE working group on the provision of information on medicines and the BMA's Medical Academic Staff Committee. We have accepted both invitations.

With regard to a higher profile in the future, the Faculty plans to continue to respond to key consultations both when specifically invited but also by seeking out those consultations which are relevant to the Faculty. In the latter situation, we should be most grateful for members to email Ben Cottam (B.Cottam@fpm.org.uk) our Policy and Communications Coordinator, when they come across a consultation to which they feel the Faculty should respond. I have agreed to an interview with Andrew Jack from the Financial Times in the New Year when we shall discuss the role of the Faculty in healthcare. On a global basis we have already exported the Certificate for Human Pharmacology to Canada as we had three candidates sit it there in 2010, but in 2011 we aim to develop the export of the Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine (DPM) and that should raise our profile outside the UK. One important area for the future is the US, where there are many Pharmaceutical Physicians without an organisation like the Faculty and this has to be a long-term target for the Faculty. Dr. Richard Horton, the editor of The Lancet, was one of the speakers at the recent Annual Faculty Symposium and Keith Bragman and I have begun discussions with him to investigate the possibility of a regular Pharmaceutical Medicine column within the journal. He has been very open to the approach and there will be more on this in future newsletters.

The responses to the questions on the Faculty website indicated that it is not used adequately by members. This is a shame and the Board is determined that this must change and has already agreed that a top priority for next year is the development of a digital strategy for the Faculty. Initially this will be a revamp of the current website to make it more user-friendly including enhanced search engine optimisation and content management. However in the meantime, I would encourage members to put the website in their favourites and visit it at least once a week. All consultations that we have agreed to respond to will be placed on the website and there will be opportunities for all members to comment on them before they are dispatched. There is also a new webpage containing notices for Faculty members to join various external committees and participate in work-streams and meetings organised by partner organisations of the Faculty.

One of the suggestions in the survey responses was for promotion of Pharmaceutical Medicine as a career option to medical students and newly qualified doctors. I am pleased to report that we have set up a working party under the Chairmanship of our Vice-President Jane Zuckerman to look at elective periods within pharmaceutical medicine for medical students and taster weeks for doctors in their Foundation years. It is of interest that in the UK Pharmaceutical Medicine is the eleventh most popular medical specialty for training out of over 30.

Over a quarter of the respondents to the survey indicated that they would be interested in becoming involved in specific Faculty activities. I am very grateful for that response and there will definitely be opportunities for those willing members to play a role as the new five year plan goes forward. The Board will be discussing it at its next meeting in January and over the coming months volunteers for various projects will be sought via the website. Other areas that the Faculty will be considering in the next year are outlined below.

- ❖ What is our role in the whole debate around the benefit/risk of medicines?
- ❖ The Faculty is now 21 years old and during 2011 we shall be promoting the role that pharmaceutical physicians have played in the development of life-changing medicines in that period. I mentioned a few in my after dinner speech at the Annual Dinner such as statins, treatments for HIV/AIDS, ACE inhibitors in heart failure and the extended life expectancy of young people with cystic fibrosis. There are many more we could mention, you know them so let us have more examples with some accompanying text.
- ❖ At the Annual Symposium, Prof. Sir Alasdair Breckenridge, the Chairman of the MHRA, challenged the Faculty to lead on obtaining better adherence to medicines by patients. The Professional Standards Committee had already begun to look at this important issue which needs real leadership and we shall actively consider how we might respond to this call by Sir Alasdair, who is a great friend of the Faculty.
- ❖ From its outset the Faculty has been responsible for standard setting within Pharmaceutical Medicine but with revalidation round the corner and the cost of education from commercial organisations getting greater, we have agreed to investigate whether and how the Faculty should become an education provider. This has considerable implications for the Faculty as a charity and so this will not be easy but we already provide some educational activities and the feedback following this year's symposium has been very positive and encouraging.

I hope that you found this newsletter on the future of the Faculty both stimulating and interesting. My thanks to all of you who took the trouble to respond to the survey and I look forward to greater interaction in the coming two years of my Presidency.

Dr Richard Tiner PFPM

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