

## **EDITORIAL – MARCH 2005**

We are back! For a variety of reasons the Med-Chi Website has been in something approaching hibernation for some months. This is mainly due to the Editor's health problems. We apologise to our readers/supporters.

The principal recent development has been the long awaited plan for the future of Bristol Health Care. This includes plans for the Hospital Service. This issue of the website contains a further swot analysis of the proposals. Our reaction to the plan is mixed – there are good things and there are not such good things.

Unfortunately, Bristol has major financial problems. The deficit of nearly £50,000,000 run up by North Bristol Health Care Trust was unique in the history of the NHS. No organisation within the Health Service had had such a large deficit. The UBHT has also been overspent. North Somerset PCT has a huge deficit. More recently a large deficit in the finances of the Social Services Department has been identified. This has major implications for the care of people with chronic illness and disability and also people who are being discharged from hospital early after surgery. Precisely why our local organisation should be chronically overspending is unclear. However, the implications for the development of local Health Care facilities is all too obvious. It is probably responsible for the watering down of the original proposals.

2–3 years ago there was the possibility of one or two new hospitals in Bristol. There was talk of replacing the BRI and/or building a brand new hospital on a green field site in North Bristol. All this has changed. The proposals now involve keeping the BRI more or less as it is except the original old 'medical' block will be replaced. The green field site for North Bristol has been abandoned in favour of revamping Southmead Hospital.

We have attempted a further SWOT analysis of the present proposals in this edition of the website. Some developments, such as the building of new community hospitals and the improvement of health centres, is to be welcomed. We confess to profound disappointment at the continued lack of integration of Specialist services and the lack of any drive to establish a single Acute Trust for Bristol. The present overhaul of health care facilities in the city is/was a major opportunity to get rid of the longstanding antipathy that has existed between our major hospitals/organisations. This, and other matters, were discussed at the joint Med-Chi/BMA meeting held in March 2004. A summary of the proceedings is available in the Archive section of the website and video/DVD copies of the proceedings are available from Janet Keen. The issues raised at that meeting are as relevant today as they were a year ago.

How can the potential for the new proposed developments be judged? Probably best by examining what is likely to happen to patients who fall ill or are injured. To this end we propose to test out the plans using five clinical scenarios:

1. A woman of 75 suffers a major stroke leaving her severely disabled.
2. A 19 year old motorcyclist suffers major multiple trauma including head, chest, abdominal, and limb injuries.
3. A man of 65 develops prostatic cancer.
4. A lady of 90, living alone, falls and fractures her hip.
5. A carpenter, aged 30, develops severe epilepsy.

We shall need the help of visitors to this website in compiling responses. Please contact us with your ideas.

## **Other matters**

We were sad to learn of the recent death of Dick Iles. He was a much loved GP in Southmead who was, for a while, Medical Officer to St Monica's.

We also noted the death of David Lawson - in his 90's. David was a pioneer in the field of cystic fibrosis.

On 23 February the Med-chi was treated to a number of presentations by medical students. Each described their experiences during electives in various parts of the world including Tibet, Thailand and Zambia. At the end of the meeting Chris Farndon presented prizes to each contributor. This year's presentations fully met the high standards set by student presentations in previous years.

## **Finally**

We need, and welcome, contributions to the website. It is worth recalling that this is the only website of its type in Bristol – encompassing all aspects of Health Care. It is not meant to be confined to doctors and we welcome contributions from people in other disciplines.

Have a good Spring!

**R Langton Hewer, Editor**