

Seasonal reflections | RCP Cymru Wales annual review

December 2021

As I come to the end of my second year as RCP vice president for Wales, and my last blog of the year, I am delighted to present an overview of the work carried out by your RCP Cymru Wales team during 2021. We have achieved so much across all our UK campaign priorities, as we work towards:

- a sustainable medical workforce that meets the needs of patients
- an integrated and people-centred approach to health
- health policy that is led by the latest research and innovation
- a reduction in health inequalities and a focus on prevention of ill-health.

2021 has been a turbulent and unsettling time. Despite this, the pandemic did not stop the activities of the college in Wales. It just meant that we did things differently – virtual meetings enabled three presidential visits, we held an [online poster competition](#) for doctors in training and our [first ever digital update in medicine](#) attracted hundreds of delegates in December.

Five big wins in 2021

- Three RCP president's visit reports, followed by health board action plans leading to change.
- Over 70 broadcast media appearances, which raised awareness of our Welsh campaign messages.
- 685 delegates booked onto the [RCP Update in medicine](#) organised by the Wales team.
- Six RCP Cymru Wales reports published, which led to print, online, radio and TV media coverage.
- Over 100 stakeholder meetings, including the Welsh government minister for health and social services.


Personally, engaging with our members is my highest priority. While I prefer to spend time with you all face to face, I've adapted to virtual gatherings. To be fair, it's possible that the accessibility of Microsoft Teams means that I have actually spent time with more members than ever this year, and it's been humbling to hear about the huge challenges faced by everyone, as well as working to deliver safe patient care and innovation across the NHS.

The team in Wales continues to develop new education and networking opportunities, with five Wales-wide college/associate college tutor meetings, a burgeoning new consultants' forum and an acute medicine webinar on maternity medicine – all organised by the RCP Cymru Wales team for a UK-wide audience.

Finally, my job would be impossible without the support of our four regional advisers: Drs Mick Kumwenda, Hilary Williams, Vivek Goel and Sam Rice, the rest of the RCP Cymru Wales Committee and all our college and associate college tutors, as well as Dr Shaun Smale, head of the school of medicine at Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW). Thank you to our outgoing lead college tutor, Dr Jo Morris and our new consultant representative, Dr Justyna Witczak who have both worked tirelessly to build networks and share learning across Wales. Most importantly, Lowri Jackson, our head of policy and campaigns and Jacqui Sullivan, our regional manager have been my rocks – diolch o galon i chi gyd.

A sustainable medical workforce

In March 2021, we prepared for the 2021 Senedd election by publishing [Recover, rebuild, renew](#), which set out what we wanted from the new Welsh government to help the NHS. This was shared with Welsh government ministers, NHS Wales and Senedd politicians and was covered extensively by the media – BBC



and ITV interviews with Roshna Roy (medical student), Dr Emma Rengasamy (foundation doctor), and Dr Ruth Williams (consultant respiratory physician) were particularly powerful.

Later in the year, we organised president's visits to north and south-east Wales. In May, we visited Ysbyty Wrexham Maelor, and in June, the Grange University Hospital, where we heard direct feedback from physicians working in those hospitals. Reports have been published, recommendations made, action plans drawn up by health boards, and huge progress is being made by everyone involved. In November, we visited Swansea Bay UHB and will be publishing our report in due course. Our job is to speak out on your behalf, and I want to thank all the doctors and physician associates who contributed to these meetings. Change cannot happen without honesty and openness, and we cannot tell your stories without you speaking up.

Dr Sam Rice was the driving force behind our first ever Cyswllt RCP Connect event in south-west Wales in March. The follow up report, [*Making the connection: Living and working through the pandemic in south west Wales*](#), received some great media coverage.

In September, Dr Nerys Conway (currently on maternity leave) chaired the latest in a series of [*#WalesFutureLeaders workshops*](#). This time, we moved online to hear from doctors across Wales about how they had adapted to different ways of working during the pandemic and the lessons they'd learned.

I'm excited to say that we've begun work to develop an SAS network for Wales. [*Dr Jacob Daniel*](#), our SAS lead in Wales, will chair a lunchtime meeting in the new year where we will bring specialty doctors together to promote learning and networking. Spread the word!

Supporting and promoting our trainee doctors

Once again, I never cease to be amazed at the innovation and drive shown by our trainees.

This year's [*Lewis Thomas Gibbon Jenkins of Briton Ferry fellowship*](#) was won by Dr David Williams. Over the next 2 years, he will research glucocorticoid therapy and the risks of adrenal crisis and major adverse hospital outcomes. I look forward to hearing more about his findings in due course.


It was another bumper year for the Wales poster competition. I was overwhelmed to find out that we received over 60 entries this year, with 20 shortlisted. The judges – Dr Shaun Smale, Dr Hilary Williams and Dr Jon Goodfellow – awarded first place to Dr Emily Appadurai, second place to Dr Mark Ponsford and third place to Dr Ben Pyrke. The highest 30 scoring abstracts have been published in the [*Wales abstract booklet 2021*](#). A massive thank you to HEIW for funding the prize monies.

In July, a hugely successful UK-wide *Call the medical registrar* conference programme was created by our RCP Cymru Wales trainee committee representative, Dr Melanie Nana, in collaboration with deputy registrar Dr Alastair Gilmore and the UK-wide RCP Trainee Committee.

Finally, I'm delighted to say that Dr Scott O'Rourke at Prince Philip Hospital in Llanelli is the 2021 Wales winner of the Turner Warwick lecturer prize. His talk on the potential of metabolomics in diagnosing and monitoring obstructive sleep apnoea hypopnoea syndrome [*is available to watch on the RCP Player*](#).

An integrated and people-centred approach to health

At the beginning of the year, at the height of the COVID-19 second wave, RCP members got in touch with us to [*highlight patient safety concerns*](#) about nosocomial transmission. We were instrumental in persuading the Welsh government to change its COVID-19 hospital discharge guidance to reduce delayed transfers of care.



As the second wave subsided, we [published a letter](#) from the Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine, thanking physicians in Wales for everything they had done during the pandemic. In October, we published [Snowed under? Our call for winter action](#), which was endorsed by 16 royal colleges and faculties, as well as the Welsh Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. It received great media coverage.

In November, 22 organisations across health and social care came together to support us in publishing [Ending the postcode lottery](#), which calls for a single national executive body with strategic oversight of Welsh health boards. In the new year, we'll be doing our best to persuade the Welsh government that an independent NHS Wales Executive would be better placed to improve patient care and deliver on the aims of [A healthier Wales](#), the Welsh government's long-term plan for health and social care.

I've also been working behind the scenes with Dr Chris Subbe at Ysbyty Gwynedd, Dr John Dean at the RCP in London and Professor John Boulton at Public Health Wales on various projects around modernising ward rounds and outpatient clinics for the post-pandemic era.

Tackling health inequalities

Ahead of the Senedd election, we [wrote to the first minister](#) calling for a cross-government strategy on health inequalities. This was endorsed by 34 organisations from across health, local government, housing, and social care. We later published [Making the difference: Tackling health inequalities in Wales](#), which was endorsed by 36 organisations. As part of this campaign, we've met with the minister for health, the Senedd Health Committee chair, and the deputy minister for wellbeing. There's lots going on to get the message across that we really need to tackle avoidable illness!

I've also really enjoyed hosting a [series of 'In conversation with...' video podcasts](#) where I get to interview interesting people about interesting things. If you have 10 minutes, do check out the RCP Player where you can watch me chatting with the older people's commissioner, the future generation's commissioner, and the director of the Bevan Commission think-tank. I even ask them for book recommendations!

Working with others


Speaking to the media on your behalf is a huge part of my role. Raising awareness of the issues facing our members is crucial, and this year I've spoken in radio and TV interviews more than 70 times, highlighting the things that matter to you. Dr Andrew Lansdown, one of our college tutors, even managed to get himself onto the front page of the *Western Mail* after an interview with *BBC 5 Live* about winter pressures!

Our news stories are regularly covered by the *Western Mail*, [WalesOnline](#), [Golwg](#) and commercial radio news bulletins in Wales. Our Twitter account [@RCPWales](#) now has over 1,000 followers and is a great way to engage with our online audience. I'd urge you to follow us if you don't already!

We continue to play an active and leading role in Senedd cross party groups, Healthy Air Cymru, the Welsh Tobacco Control Alliance, Obesity Alliance Cymru, the Welsh NHS Confederation Health and Wellbeing Alliance, the Royal College Mental Health Expert Advisory Group and the Welsh Academy of Medical Royal Colleges.

Influencing change

It's safe to say that the RCP is firmly established as a leading voice on the political stage in Wales. We meet regularly with Welsh government ministers, Senedd politicians, the chief medical officer, NHS Wales executive directors and third sector stakeholders. We are often mentioned by Senedd members during plenary debates, especially for our campaigns on the medical workforce and health inequalities, and we've



responded to countless consultations and inquiries. For example, I am representing the Welsh Academy of Medical Royal Colleges at meetings with the Welsh government about updating AAC guidance. We continue to urge college involvement in appointing consultant posts and approving job descriptions.

Wales on the RCP stage

One of the most rewarding parts of my role is promoting Wales and her physicians within the wider college. I'm very proud to say that the [first ever virtual RCP update in medicine](#) was organised by the RCP Cymru Wales team and can still be accessed on the RCP Player until 8 March 2022. This year, we've also published a number of [stories](#) and articles on the [RCP website](#) and in the RCP membership magazine, [Commentary](#). And I hope my monthly blog continues to inform and entertain!

Where you have something you'd like to showcase, please do get in touch with the team. We're always on the lookout for case studies and stories from the front line.

Remember, elections for RCP vice president for Wales will take place in autumn 2022. If what you've read today has inspired you, please consider standing. Now, more than ever, as we rebuild after the pandemic, RCP members and fellows deserve a strong voice in the Senedd, in the media, and with the Welsh government.

Can I also remind you to complete the 3-RCP 2021 census? Both the [consultant census](#) and the [higher trainee census](#) are now open. Please do fill it in and help us to help you lobby for change in the Welsh NHS.

There are challenges ahead, but together we know that medicine is brilliant, and so are our members.

Dr Olwen Williams OBE

RCP vice president for Wales

Consultant in sexual health and HIV medicine

with

Dr Mick Kumwenda

RCP regional adviser for north Wales

Dr Vivek Goel

RCP regional adviser for south-east Wales

Dr Hilary Williams

RCP regional adviser for south-east Wales

Dr Sam Rice

RCP regional adviser for south-west Wales