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Developing our NHS care objectives: A consultation on the draft mandate to the NHS Commissioning Board

Following the recent publication of the draft mandate to the NHS Commissioning Board, I wish to welcome the measures put in place to ensure that the Board satisfies its statutory duty to promote innovation, research and the use of research evidence.

The Academy of Medical Sciences considers that research and innovation must sit at the heart of the NHS to improve all aspects of patient care, deliver cost-effective healthcare and facilitate the growth of a strong commercial life sciences sector. During the passage of the Health & Social Care Bill through Parliament, we have emphasised the importance of promotion of research and innovation being a core duty of the NHS Commissioning Board, and of the Secretary of State for Health and the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). We now welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft mandate for the NHS Commissioning Board. We have also contributed to a joint response from a coalition of charities and organisations who fund and support health research in the UK.

The Academy welcomes the recognition of the value of research and innovation in the draft mandate, as outlined in the section *Promoting growth, innovation and research*. We strongly support the Government's commitment to ensure the new commissioning system promotes and supports participation by NHS organisations and NHS patients in research through Objective 17. Ensuring payment of treatment costs for NHS patients who are taking part in research funded by Government and Research Charity partner organisations is a vital component of this Objective. We therefore welcome the inclusion of evidence of payments of these costs for research commissioned by the Board and CCGs, as measures for assessing progress against the Objective.

The NHS infrastructure provides a valuable platform for research and innovation in the UK, and the Academy is pleased that the Board will have an important role in protecting and developing this infrastructure. It is critical that this infrastructure is fostered and advanced. We therefore support the inclusion of evidence of increased numbers of patients recruited to research, and evidence of improved performance of initiating and delivering clinical research to time and target as part of assessment measures for the Board.

Whilst we welcome the objective for the Board to promote access to clinically appropriate drugs and technologies recommended by NICE, and the inclusion of monitoring compliance with NICE Technology Appraisals as one of the key measures to assess progress, the Academy believes that a more overarching statement is required to ensure that the Board fulfils its role in the promotion and uptake of innovation within the NHS and a commitment to research and innovation is embraced at every level within the NHS. Currently, the mention of research is located only in the chapter on the broader role of the NHS and the annexes to the draft mandate. This could be considered that the promotion of research is not being viewed as a core goal, to be embedded within the entire system.

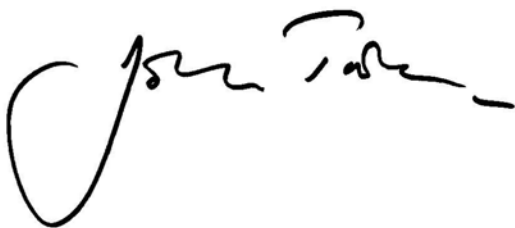
The Academy believes that empowerment of patients, which includes empowering them to participate in research and to drive the adoption of new advances within the health service, should be a central component of the reformed NHS. We therefore welcome the publication of the Choice Framework (that includes '*choosing to participate in research*') and the provision of information for patients wishing to take part in research.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012 states that the NHS Commissioning Board must have regard to the need to promote education and training so as to assist the Secretary of State in the discharge of his duty in this regard. We are therefore disappointed by the lack of attention to education and training within the current draft mandate. We would urge the Government to reconsider this aspect of the draft and to introduce more detail here, to ensure that the Board is able to deliver on this duty.

The Academy also considers that the current draft mandate does not clarify how the Board will work with other organisations, such as the National Institute for Health Research, Public Health England and the Health Research Authority that are engaged in the conduct, support and regulation of research in the NHS. It is vital that there is close collaboration and co-ordination between these bodies and a shared objective to embed a culture of research and innovation throughout the system

We hope that research and innovation remains a key priority for the NHS Commissioning Board, and for the entire NHS, to ensure the future excellence of UK healthcare and the UK life sciences industry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Tooke', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.