

Executive Director's Review of the Year – AGM 2018

President, Council members, Fellows and guests, I am delighted to present the Executive Director's report to the Annual General Meeting.

Our 20th anniversary has prompted reflection, celebration and renewed ambition in the Academy of Medical Sciences. Taking the time to look at how much we've done has been hugely inspiring in considering what we can achieve in the future. The period on which I'm reporting today – Financial Year 2017-18 - reflects the cumulative activity of the years that went before it, but also our aspirations for the Academy of Medical Sciences of the future.

The most striking feature was a step change in our international programme, supported in part by funding from the Government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF). We held policy workshops on paediatric neurodevelopmental defects in Brazil, on obesity in Malaysia and on clinical research capacity in low and middle-income countries in London. These events convened researchers and policy-makers to effect change and built policy capacity in our sister Academies. Work progressed towards the successful conclusion of our international Multimorbidity project, and collaborations were established with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science on the application of AI to medical imaging research, and with the US National Academy of Medicine on behavioural science. Relationships with sister Academies in Europe were strengthened through meetings with the Dutch, German, Romanian and Swiss Academies, and we continued to provide substantial support to the Federation of European Academies of Medicine to strengthen its influence in Europe.

A significant expansion in our international grants programme was delivered through a new scheme of GCRF Networking Grants, designed to support consortia of researchers to form interdisciplinary collaborations with UK researchers. In the first round, 40 grants were awarded across 18 different countries. Newton Fellowships were awarded to researchers from China, India, Mexico, Brazil, Turkey and South Africa, and 26 awards were made to support exchanges between researchers in the UK and Middle East through the Daniel Turnberg Travel Fellowship Scheme. Since its inception in 2008, the Turnberg scheme has helped over 250 researchers to forge new collaborations. With the support of the Yusuf and Farida Hamied Foundation, we launched a programme to strengthen research links between the UK and India around antimicrobial resistance. This five-year programme will support a Visiting Professorship scheme and two major scientific meetings in India and the UK.

We welcomed this increased international activity against the backdrop of our continued work to safeguard biomedical research after Britain leaves the EU. This work included numerous statements, consultation responses, and meetings with senior officials and Ministers, as well as sitting on the Science Minister's High Level Brexit Group. Efforts continued to inform the Industrial Strategy, particularly the Life Sciences Industrial Strategy, including commissioning work to support a 'fresh case' for enhanced Government investment in research and innovation.

Eight FORUM meetings were held in 2017/8, the highest annual number to date, to match the rise in demand from our stakeholders. Most events were held in partnership, providing additional reach, leverage and impact. Topics included medical innovation, personalised psychiatry, endpoints in oncology research, early detection and diagnosis research and the digital maturity of health systems. These meetings continued to attract leaders from across academia, industry and healthcare, providing an important and neutral platform for discussion.

Our major policy report, *'Enhancing the use of evidence to judge the potential benefits and harms of medicines'*, was launched in June 2017, followed by an implementation workshop with key stakeholders. The launch was accompanied by a comprehensive communications campaign and work to action several recommendations, including a labelling system for press releases, endorsement of a pocket guide for patients by the Royal College of GPs, and launch of standards for public engagement in research by INVOLVE.

Impacts continued from our 2016 report 'Improving the health of the public by 2040'. The recommended co-ordinating body for health of the public research was established as a sub-group of OSCHR and liaison with NIHR, the Faculty of Public Health, Public Health England and others progressed work to review medical undergraduate training and to connect researchers, practitioners and policy makers.

In 2017/8 we made 32 Springboard awards to newly independent biomedical scientists and awarded 42 Starter Grants for Clinical Lecturers. These awardees joined the 139 early career researchers who were paired with mentors from amongst Academy Fellows, bringing the total mentoring pairs to over 750. Five career development events were held across the UK, including the Academy's flagship cross-specialty clinical science meeting – the Spring Meeting for Clinical Academics in Training. A further 20 women participated in SUSTAIN, our year-long programme to support women researchers as they establish their independent research careers, involving tailored training, media skills, coaching and mentoring.

We reached the milestone of 100 women trained to provide expert media commentary. A media showcase was held for the first time in January, connecting 11 media-trained women to 22 BBC journalists from news, current affairs, factual entertainment and children's programmes. Feedback from the BBC on this completely novel event was hugely positive. Over 50 media items were generated featuring our trained women experts, including multiple broadcast items on the Today programme, Newsnight, World at One, PM, Inside Health and Women's Hour.

Overall, in 2017/18 the Academy received more coverage in more media outlets than ever before. The launch of the 'evidence' report reached 6 million people through broadcast media, 13 million through print media and engaged over 34,000 users on social media in the first 24 hours. We worked hard to enhance the quantity and quality of our digital communications, with the introduction of animations, visual notes, blog posts and tailored news articles.

We ran a rewarding and revealing programme of deliberative dialogue with public, patients and healthcare professionals on the future of healthcare data and emerging technologies. Events took place in London, Sheffield and Cardiff, with outputs informing a policy project that will be launched this coming Thursday.

I say this every year, but it really is true that all this work relies on us electing the very best candidates to the Academy Fellowship. In April 2017 we elected 46 new Fellows from a pool of 381 candidates, bring the total number of Fellows to 1,236. This new intake included the highest proportion of women at 37%. We continued to improve gender diversity all our work, including events, working groups, committees and panels. Gender, ethnicity and disability information across all activities is now presented annually to Council for review, helping to identify priority areas for attention.

Looking past 2017/18 we have been embarking on really exciting new directions for the Academy, most notably FLIER, a new cross-sector leadership scheme, a new global professorship scheme, and increased numbers of Springboard awards. Responding to Fellows' desire for more opportunities for inter-disciplinary scientific discussion, we'll be holding meetings on the developing brain, behavioural science, adolescent mental health and addiction, and we recently held a highly successful meeting with the Royal Society on Delivering Novel Therapies in the 21st Century. Our public engagement programme will also take us into new territory with The Departure Lounge – a programme of dialogue around death and dying.

With little means to generate our own income, the Academy relies on supporters who are sufficiently persuaded and generous to fund our work. We are immensely grateful to Helix donors, Trusts, Foundations, companies and Government who support us in various ways. Wellcome Trust in particular has been a most valued partner, and recently committed to ongoing support for two of our flagship grant schemes and INSPIRE programme.

The breadth of activity we undertake asks a lot of our staff, Council, President and Officers, who unfailingly rise to the challenge. In particular I would like to thank Anne Dell and Fiona Watt who today stand down as, respectively, Treasurer and Vice-President. It's been a brief stint with Fiona, cut short by her fantastic appointment as Executive Chair of MRC, but it's been a valuable opportunity for us to get to know each other better, and puts our organisations in a great position going forward. The end of Anne Dell's 4 year tenure is marked by a significant scaling up in the Academy's income and expenditure, which she has overseen with customary commitment and enthusiasm. Thank you Anne for your diligence and wise counsel. In bidding farewell to Anne and Fiona, we welcome Ed Bullmore and Mike Malim. The staff and I very much look forward to working with you.

I close, as ever, by thanking the brilliant Academy staff, whose passion and commitment ensure the aspirations of our Fellows, partners and donors are realised. I am pleased to report that the Academy of Medical Sciences punched well above its weight in the annual Inter-Academy Olympiad and were only robbed of a better placing by the failure of the Executive Director to win the rock, paper, scissors tie-breaker. I am sure you enjoy drawing as much energy and inspiration from the Academy staff as I do.

Thank you again for your ongoing support.

Thank you President.