

Welcome to *BMJ Leader*

Stephen H Powis,^{1,2} James Mountford^{2,3}

A warm welcome to *BMJ Leader*, the official journal of the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management (FMLM). Since its inception in 2011, FMLM has endeavoured to promote excellence in clinical leadership. The creation of *BMJ Leader* is an important next step in realising that aim. As the inaugural editorial team, it has been our privilege to shape the new journal, and we are excited now it has become a reality.

We are launching the journal at a time of great challenge — and equally of great opportunity — across all health systems in both high-income and low/middle income countries. Ageing populations with an increasing burden of chronic disease are placing ever-increasing strains on healthcare during a period of great economic pressure and uncertainty. Scientific progress continues to drive costs upward, and populations rightly have ever-higher expectations of their health systems. Technology and social factors are changing the relationship between citizens and health professionals, impacting what people seek from healthcare and how they interact with the system. The boundary between citizen/patient and professional, and the nature of the interactions which deliver healthcare are changing. Political forces are driving radical redesigns of healthcare systems. All these factors alter the mix and roles of the professionals needed to deliver optimal patient care, which in turn has profound implications for their education and training.

Against this background, evidence is accumulating that the most successful healthcare systems and organisations within them are those with the strongest clinical leadership. This holds across health systems whatever their basic structure, financing and payment arrangements, and whether organisations are public or private, for profit or not for

profit. It becomes more important as healthcare is able to achieve more and consumes a greater share of society's wealth.

In short, there has never been a greater need to understand and promote the benefits of clinical leadership, and to set about building the clinical leadership capacity required. There are reasons to be optimistic — the next generation of clinicians is increasingly aware of the value of leadership and the benefits that can be gained from actively shaping system-wide and population-based approaches to health. They are also increasingly aware of the potential benefits to them personally in terms of career progress and job satisfaction. So, clinical leadership is becoming ever-more professionally relevant, and we are heartened that in many contexts it is now seen as a natural and essential element of a clinician's professionalism. (We should add at this point that by 'clinician' we mean healthcare professionals of all types, not only doctors.)

Our aim at *BMJ Leader* is quite simply to become the premier source for evidence-based research and opinion in clinical leadership and management. There is a pressing need for more research in this area, as highlighted by FMLM Chief Executive Peter Lees in a commentary accompanying this editorial.¹ Often, the methods of research in leadership and management differ from those in clinical science — leadership and management are social disciplines, and methods are those of social science with which clinicians may be unfamiliar. *BMJ Leader* will strengthen the evidence base for clinical leadership by publishing high quality original research, either as *full length papers* or *brief reports*. In addition, we will publish regular *reviews* that focus on assembling and interpreting the evidence base. We also wish to stimulate debate, so our *commentaries* and *editorials* will provide a medium for opinion-led, evidence-based discussion. The journal's website outlines the format we seek for each of these types of contribution.

As an online journal, we are able to publish papers as soon as they complete our editorial review processes, but we will

also collate papers into indexed, quarterly issues. We will commission collections of topic-based papers, sometimes under the guidance of invited guest editors. To mark our launch, we have commissioned a series of papers with a single title: *The Future of Clinical Leadership*. Published over the next few months, each author in this series will address this same topic from their own unique perspective.

Although editorially independent, we acknowledge the vital importance of maintaining a close relationship with FMLM members. The journal will therefore include a regular *View from the Faculty*, a section reserved for invited contributions from FMLM. However, we seek to build a broad, international readership which will be reflected in our editorial board. We encourage submissions from everyone interested in clinical leadership, irrespective of professional group or geographical location.

We firmly believe the strengths of FMLM combined with the experience of BMJ Journals will enable us to create a world-class journal. We hope you will join us on that journey. We look forward to your contributions and suggestions to develop the journal into something which materially advances the understanding and practice of clinical leadership. In doing so, this journal will take its place alongside the traditional scientific journals as a source of learning for the benefit of patients and populations. We also believe that it can make a difference to the working lives and satisfaction of staff.

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¹Centre for Nephrology, University College London, London, UK

²Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK

³UCLPartners, London, UK

Correspondence to Professor Stephen H Powis, Centre for Nephrology, University College London, Royal Free Hospital, London NW3 2PF, UK; s.powis@ucl.ac.uk