



## Archives

**Repository: Royal College of General Practitioners GB2134**

**Collection: ACE College - Central Records 1948-2008**

**Creator(s): Royal College of General Practitioners 1952-2008**

**Administrative History:** The Royal College of General Practitioners was founded in 1952 to provide an 'academic headquarters for general practice [and] to raise the standards and status of general practice'.

Although various attempts were made in the nineteenth century to found a college to represent general practitioners it was not until the founding of the National Health Service in 1948 that the need became urgent. General practice became responsible for all personal medical care and the gateway for individuals to access hospital, specialist care and sickness benefit. However, general practitioners were not able to cope with such a massively expanded service without a reciprocal rise in physical, financial and administrative support. J S Collings, an Australian visitor to England in 1950 reported that he had observed exhausted and demoralized doctors, hurried work and low standards.

A small group of general practitioners decided to do something to improve matters. They wanted to provide leadership, raise standards of education, practice and research through the establishment of a dedicated college for general practitioners. In 1951, a meeting was held and by February 1952, a steering committee was formed. The committee included seven general practitioners and five sympathetic consultants and was chaired by a former Minister of Health, Sir Henry Willink. Other members included Drs. Fraser Rose, Geoffrey Barber, Talbot Rogers and John Hunt. After only eight meetings, the new College of General Practitioners was legally constituted in Nov 1952.

Unlike the other Medical Colleges, the College has a federal structure with regional faculties and Scottish [1953], Welsh [1968], Northern Ireland [2001] Councils as well as the College council. The College council meets five times a year and is made up of representatives from the 33 faculties as well as 18 elected members. There are five Honorary officers elected by Council: Chair, two Vice-Chairs, an Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer. The President is elected by membership in a national ballot and like the Honorary officers holds office for three years.

The College of General Practitioners received the prefix 'Royal' in 1967 and was presented with its Royal Charter in 1972. In 1972 HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh was appointed an Honorary Fellow and became President of the College – since relinquishing the post he has been the College's patron. In 1992, the College's fortieth year HRH The Prince of Wales accepted the Presidency.

The College purchased its London headquarters, 14 Princes Gate the former residence of the American ambassador, in 1962.

Membership was opened in January 1953 and within six weeks 1655 doctors had joined. By the time of the first AGM in November 1953 committees had been established to consider

education for under and post graduates and for general practice research.

An Examination Committee was formed in November 1954 "to give full and detailed study to an examination as a possible method of entry to Membership of the College..." but the first examination for membership [MRCGP] of the RCGP was not held until in 1965 and three years later the examination became the sole method of entry to the College. An Examination Board was established in 1987. By 2007 a new exam the nMRCGP replaced the MRCGP.

A new higher class of membership "Fellowship" was formed in 1967; this was traditionally awarded to College members who had made a contribution to the development of general practice and/or to the College. A second route to Fellowship started in 1989 with Fellowship By Assessment [FBA]. In 2006, both routes were replaced by a single "unified" self nominating scheme.

In November 1995 a working group MAP [Membership by Assessment of Performance] was set up to look into alternate ways of membership than examination with the proviso that such alternative assessment must be of equivalent status and rigour to the MRCGP examination. This became iMAP in 2007.

Other major activities of the College have included successfully campaigning for compulsory vocational training through its submission to the Todd report [1966]; establishing of university departments in general practice; research including national mortality surveys and oral contraception studies; quality initiatives "What Sort of Doctor" [1985] and clinical practice evaluation CPEP [1998]; patients liaison [1983]; Commission on Primary Care [1991]; work on clinical research and medical ethics; international relations (including helping to form equivalent colleges in other countries) and publications including the British Journal of General Practice. The Royal College of General Practitioners has worked together with other Colleges, medical institutions and government departments on an ongoing basis and on an ad hoc basis to produce specific reports and policy statements.

In 1981 the College was restructured with the creation of four divisions: communications, education, membership and research these were reduced to three in 1987 with "services to members and faculties", "clinical and research" and education. In 1993, the divisional structure was replaced by four co-ordinating networks covering education, research, quality and services. Each network was supported by committees and task forces concentrating on a specific subject. E.g. prescribing, nutrition, AIDS, inner city, rural, maternity care, substance abuse, women in general practice. The networks became Directorates in 2003.

Central records are created by the College Council, Committees, working parties and task forces and those departments based in the College's headquarters and satellite buildings in London, including policy & governance which administers the Council and Committee system which formulates college policy; administration of the College, examinations, membership, courses, publications, press and PR, finance, information, development and sales.

## **Immediate Source of Acquisition** Transferred from Departments **Scope and Content**

Records generated by central departments of College

A CE A Formal 1953-2007

Records (including Annual Reports) generated by the formal, public functions of the College such as Annual General Meetings, College Dinners and Annual Lectures 1952-date.

A CE B Council 1952-2000

Records of College governing body and its precursors, including the General Practice Steering Committee and the Provisional Foundation Council

A CE C Executive 1953-2007

Records of executive bodies, including Finance and General Purposes Committee (1953-1964), General Purposes Committee (1964-1989) and Council Executive Committee (1989-)

A CE D Finance 1958-2008

Records of finance bodies and officers, including Finance Committee (1964-)

A CE E Fellowship & Awards 1955-2008

Records generated by committees concerned with the granting of College fellowships, awards and other honours.

A CE F Membership & Examinations 1954-2008

Records of membership and examination officers and committees.

A CE G Research 1952-2008

[See history and summary of these records on AIM25. Other records of interest as those of the research units ARE]

Records of Research committees and projects.

A CE H Education 1952-2008

Records generated by committees, working parties and projects concerned with education and training.

A CE J Quality 1955-2007

Records generated by committees and projects concerned with quality standards .

A CE K Facilities & House Services 1965-1992

Records generated by technical services supporting the work and maintaining the premises of the College.

A CE L Services to Members 1952-2007

Records generated by College services to members, including publications, sales, public relations and information provision.

A CE M Faculty Support 1953-1997

Records generated by central College contact with regional (including overseas) faculties and regional Councils. [Not to be confused with records relating to individual faculties, which are arranged separately (A-FE, A-FH, A-FI, A-FS, A-FW, A-FX)]

A CE N External Relations 1948-1997

Records generated by College contact with external organizations.

A CE O Clinical 1972-2000

Records generated by College Clinical projects and initiatives

A CE P International 1978-2007

Records of the International projects and initiatives

## **Language**

English

## **Accruals**

regular

## **Arrangement**

Department

## **Level of Description**

Fonds

## **Access Conditions**

Access only on written application to the Archivist. Royal College of General practitioners 14 Princes Gate, Hyde park, London, SW7 1PU.

## **Date created**

23 June 1998

## **Last modified**

16 September 2008

## **Initials**

CSG, CJ