

CONFERENCE REPORT

The Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management Annual Conference 2024

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The annual conference of the Faculty of Medical Leadership and Management (FMLM) took place from 26–27 March 2024 at the University of Manchester. The central theme was ‘improving patient-centred care through inclusive leadership’. The conference was attended by various delegates in healthcare leadership roles nationwide, including medical directors, consultants, registrars, medical and dental clinical and leadership fellows, and even members of a patient representation group. Importantly, it was announced that the FMLM is transitioning from a faculty to a pan-UK College of Clinical Leadership.

The conference started with opening remarks from Professor Graham Lord (Vice-President and Dean of the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health at the University of Manchester) and Professor Rich Withnall (CEO of FMLM), highlighting that this was the first face-to-face FMLM conference since the COVID-19 pandemic. They were then joined by Professor Sir Stephen Powis, Professor Dame Helen Stokes-Lampard, and Professor Sir Simon Wessely for a plenary session on integrated care. They discussed how improvements have been made in the integration of care for chronic issues such as cancer and cardiovascular disease and how an ageing population continues to be a core issue facing the NHS. The topic of the NHS long-term workforce plan was raised, and the importance of compassionate and kind leadership was discussed. I found it interesting to hear about the study conducted by Professor Wessely with soldiers in Afghanistan. This study found the most significant determinant of good mental health among soldiers was perceived high-quality leadership from their superiors.

Following this, senior members of the Greater Manchester Integrated Care Partnership discussed the regional approach to integrated care in a plenary session. They mentioned the significant challenge of access to NHS dentistry, with panel members acknowledging the shortcomings

of the current contractual arrangements.

The panel also emphasised the responsibility that leaders have in maintaining hope and optimism in the workforce while addressing the significant issues the NHS faces.

All delegates then broke off into afternoon workshops. We were spoilt for choice but I decided to attend a BMJ Leader session on kindness and healthcare. It was suggested that kindness can reduce inpatient length of stay and the number of patient safety events that occur. In this way, healthcare leaders would benefit from understanding how to create psychologically safe spaces for their teams. I also attended a workshop on building fair training cultures led by members of the General Medical Council. It highlighted recent emerging evidence about the impact of differential attainment on medical trainees from minority ethnic groups and the role of mentorship in eliminating that attainment gap and its benefits to both mentee and mentor.

On the second day of the conference, delegates were invited to attend one of several breakfast sessions on healthcare leadership research, the NHS pension scheme, managing imposter syndrome, and a live recording of the ‘You Are Not a Frog podcast’. The main programme commenced with opening remarks from Professor Sir Mayur Lakhani CBE (Chair of FMLM), followed by plenary sessions on undergraduate and trainee leadership, chaired by senior medical educators and junior doctors. It was suggested that with the level of change and complexity in the NHS today, it has never been more critical to invest in leadership development actively. They lauded the wealth of opportunities available with protected time for leadership development and how those who have seized these opportunities have had an impact at both organisational and system levels.

Having attended a workshop on data and AI, I was fascinated to hear about how the NHS CLEAR programme is harnessing innovative technologies to facilitate improvements in workforce planning and patient care. A live demonstration of a pre-anaesthetic consultation showed how burgeoning AI

admin-reduction software could write your notes for you. Watch this space! A workshop about evolving professional identities led by Dr Simon Moralee and Professor Chloe Orkin stimulated discussion about how one’s identity as a leader can shape one’s career trajectory and barriers encountered.

The conference concluded with a keynote speech by Steve Brine MP, about the various public health initiatives of the Health and Social Care Select Committee. He spoke about how he challenged the recently announced dental recovery plan in Parliament and feels it will not do enough to bring NHS dentists back into NHS dentistry.

Mr Brine MP was challenged on the recently published British Social Attitudes survey results, which demonstrated public satisfaction with the NHS has fallen to the lowest level ever recorded. He outlined the disparity in patient experiences across the nation and the difficulty in securing more funding for the NHS while there are other competing public issues, eg defence.

Professor Rich Withnall delivered the closing remarks, stressing the importance of a collaborative approach to facing the NHS’s challenges. The key messages I took from this conference were how encouraging integration, self-awareness, compassionate leadership and creating psychologically safe spaces are central to improving staff wellbeing and patient outcomes. This conference was well-organised, motivating and incredibly insightful, and I would definitely recommend attending next year for all colleagues in leadership positions.

For more information about leadership development roles available for dental team members, visit:

- <https://eastmidlandsdeanery.nhs.uk/dental/leadership-fellow> for details of the NHS England (Midlands) Dental Leadership Fellowship programme
- <https://www.fmlm.ac.uk/programmes-services/individual-support/clinical-fellow-schemes/chief-dental-officers-clinical-fellow-scheme> for details of the Chief Dental Officer England’s Clinical Fellow Scheme.