

Dear Member

I hope you had a reasonable Christmas and looking forward to better new year.

I really do hope that this is not another false dawn and that we will be able to get back to some sort of normality "living with the virus" as the year proceeds.

There is a need to look carefully at our organisation that started more than 40 years ago in 1978. Things have radically changed since then and it's time to move forward.

We want to become a truly representative membership organisation. Therefore the Trustees are proposing to give more members more opportunities of participating and influencing the Fellowship. The new proposed role of County Representative gives support to the Regional Representative role and the chance to coordinate branches within the county, to ensure that local views of members are collected, collated and fed into the system. Very rarely under the existing arrangements do we receive suggestions from the grass roots.

The new Members Council (the terminology changed to reflect this new approach) will choose its own Chair and Vice-Chair and the Chair will attend as an observer, the Board of Trustees. Whilst these changes might seem insignificant, it is a considerable change in the culture of the organisation. The Members' Council becomes truly reflective of members' views. In due course, we would like to invite members to observe the Board of Trustees meetings.

From our initial discussions, there does not seem to be much opposition to these proposals and indeed your Regional Representatives voted in favour of the changes at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> September. Given that endorsement, Trustees agreed that the new proposed structure should be put forward for consultation.

You will have seen in the November issue of the Fellowship newsletter the various other changes that are suggested, but let me emphasise that these are proposals, not decisions.

A series of consultation meetings throughout England will be held over the next few months as follows:-

- 26 January - at Portishead Methodist Church, Bristol for members from Western England
- 1 February - at Liverpool Quaker Meeting House, Liverpool, for members from the North West
- 2 February - at the Raddison Hotel in York, for members from North East and Yorkshire
- 9 February - at St Elizabeth Hall, Exeter Street, Salisbury, for members from Wessex (at 1.30 pm)
- 24 February - at Horringer Community Centre, Bury St Edmunds, for members from East Anglia (at 1 pm)
- 22 March - at Lancaster Hall Hotel, Paddington, for members from North West and North East Thames

The views expressed at these meetings will be reported to the Board of Trustees and in due course a ballot of branches will be held.

Mirthy have offered NHSRF members free access to their calendar of events for 3 months. With immediate effect, from 25 January, and every 2 weeks from then, there will be a zoom event, starting at 11.30 am, to which all NHSRF members have access. Regular information will appear on the NHSRF Facebook page, which will include a weekly "whats on at Mirthy".

You do not need to register in advance for the talk. Just go to [www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF](http://www.mirthy.co.uk/NHSRF) and click the purple 'Join Event' button underneath the talk in question at 11.25am. Clear instructions are on the website. We will review the arrangements at the end of March and decide the best steps for the next financial year.

#### Forthcoming talks:-

25 January – 11.30am

Thomas Hardy – The Man, his Work and his Wessex – Margaret Mills

8 February – 11.30am

A Journey Through South African History- Chris Forse

22 February – 11.30am

Chloroform – Sense and Insensibility – Sun Jester

It's good to see that we now have over 2000 members and followers of our Facebook page. It continues to be a source of useful information for members and demonstrates what our members are interested in and shares accounts of branch activities.

This newsletter has been sent to those by email on 29th January but the printing process means that others won't receive theirs 7-10 days later. The more people that give authority to use email addresses, the more effective our communications become.

One of our members referred me to correspondence received from NHS Pensions that informed her that a reconciliation exercise had highlighted an overpayment which had to be rectified. I made contact with NHS Business Services Authority and over Christmas and the New Year they provided our member with a full explanation and as far as she is concerned, the matter is now closed. In case other members have received the same letter, the position as explained by NHSBSA is as below:-

#### Guaranteed Minimum pension (GMP) reconciliation

NHS Pensions and other public sector pension schemes have recently undertaken a data reconciliation exercise with HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), known as the Guaranteed Minimum pension (GMP) reconciliation, to make sure that the data held in member records is accurate following the end of contracting out.

'Contracting out' was the process by which public sector pension schemes, like the NHS Pension Scheme, took on responsibility for paying part of State Pensions, known as State Earnings Related Pension Scheme (SERPs). In return, members paid a lower rate of National Insurance contributions. This ended with the introduction of the new State Pension Scheme in 2016.

This reconciliation exercise allowed schemes and HMRC to compare contracted out records for members who reached their state pension age before April 2016. The reconciliation exercise has identified cases where the GMP details held by the Scheme were incorrect.

Where the data reconciliation has shown that the Scheme did not have the correct GMP for the member, we have reviewed the member's record and contacted them to let them know that there has been an under or overpayment.

Where there has been an underpayment, members will now receive their updated pension amount each month and a one off payment to cover arrears.

Where there has been an overpayment, the NHS Pension Scheme regulations state that in order to prevent further overpayment we are not able to continue to pay the incorrect higher amount, and where this is the case, the current level of NHS pension for some pensioners has been corrected. Members who have been overpaid will not be asked to repay any differences, however going forward, their pension will be reduced to the new, correct amount.

The number of cases found where there has been either an under or over payment represents less than 1% of our pensioner membership.

However, another of our members was not comfortable with the outcome, and on 12 December sent me an email which I did not receive. I would like to assure everybody that I do respond as quickly as possible to all correspondence but if within 7 days or so you don't get a response, please don't hesitate to ring central office. In any correspondence you send to me it is always helpful if you include a telephone contact number as often it is easier for me to call rather than deal with a complicated issue by email.

Please may I remind you about our new short story competition launched at Conference 2021 "How many of you have said I should write a book and not got round to it". Now is the opportunity to submit a short story health related which could be humorous or factual of no more than 1500 words. This is the brainchild of Peter Sykes who has written many books and he will be joined by two other judges determine results.

#### Entry criteria:

This is a competition open to NHSRF members, for the best short story based in a healthcare or social care setting.

Maximum length 1500 words (No minimum length)

Stories may be fact or fiction on any subject. Good use of language to tell the story is more important than spelling and grammar.

Entry is free and multiple entries will be accepted.

Ideally submissions should be typed and double spaced.

The author's name and contact details must not appear on the submission. Please write an accompanying note.

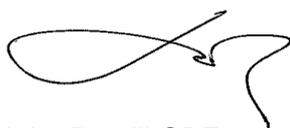
The closing date for entries is the 30th April 2022. The winners will be announced and prizes presented at the Fellowships Annual Conference in October 2022.

All stories submitted may be published in Fellowship literature and on the [www.medicaltales.org](http://www.medicaltales.org) website

Paul Farenden who has been the honorary treasurer (and a trustee) since 2015 has decided to stand down. As a result of which we are now looking for a replacement. If you have held a senior finance post in the past and would be interested in this influential position please make contact with me or if you know of anybody who you think might want to take on this voluntary position please let me know. The responsibilities include supporting the board of trustees in making long term financial decisions, ensuring financial viability and maintaining financial records and procedures. The honorary treasurer is expected to attend 3 board meetings a year and the AGM in addition to advising the audit committee. As I have explained this is a voluntary position, for which some travel is expected and expenses paid. The post has been advertised externally but it is just as likely that one of our members might fit the bill. The closing date for expression of interest is 31st January 2022.

You will be aware that a major recruitment campaign will be held in April and May this year and I am sure that I can rely on everyone to give all new members a very warm welcome.

Best wishes



John Rostill OBE  
Chief Executive