

Meet your President Elect

In June 2019, **Dr Eddie Morris** became the first person to be elected President of the RCOG by the wider membership of the College

“I’M A VERY VISUAL person,” says Dr Eddie Morris, RCOG President Elect, who will take over from the current President, Professor Lesley Regan, in December 2019. “When I plan surgery I like to have pictures so I can visualise what I need to do as well as communicate to people what operation they may need and how I plan to do it.”

He brings that approach to his work at the College. “I’ve asked for my office to have a big map of the UK to show me where I’ve been and where I need to go to see people,” he says. This is all part of his orientation plan: he wants to get out to members around the country to find out what their priorities and problems are. “Every time the College interacts with a member, it should be a positive experience.”

Fresh ideas

Eddie will be the 31st and, at 54, the second-youngest person to preside over the 90-year-old institution. Speaking from his office at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital, where he is a consultant gynaecologist, he is upbeat and bursting with ideas.

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“We have some fantastic things coming on the horizon for RCOG members,” he says. “The new curriculum, the new trainee and CPD ePortfolios are designed for our trainees and members and are fit for the 21st century.”

Digital future

He wants to take that digital strategy much further, though. “When someone at the medical student level is thinking about a career in O&G, they will look to our website,” he explains. “They want to see, does this look like a well organised specialty? Does the RCOG look like a welcoming family to be part of? When a trainee decides to enter O&G, they should register on an RCOG system that helps them build a meaningful relationship with the College that will last for their whole career. And that every subsequent interaction is effectively under one login.” He compares this to the way people interact with their bank has evolved – from queuing in branches to controlling your spending on your mobile device. “Whether you’re a trainee, SAS doctor or a consultant, you should be able to log in to the College website and see your CPD or where you are in your career progression,” Eddie says. “We’re getting there, but it’s complicated and something we must really get right.”

The College’s difficulties with exam results last year – when some candidates were sent the incorrect results – is an example of a need for a more progressive digital strategy, Eddie believes. “We accept the findings of the investigation around the exams,” he says. “Electronic exams are safe, secure and efficient for candidates, but only if there’s a big investment of finances to effectively pump-prime it. I very much hope my leadership will get us away from crisis management to crisis prevention. It is vital that we get this right.”



He hopes that the timing of his appointment, plus the much anticipated move to Union Street in November, will help galvanise the College to focus even more on its members. “The move is a significant investment which will put the College on a firm financial footing and provide a modern home for our members for decades to come,” he says.

With the move complete, however, there will be more time and resource to focus on the membership journey.

Eddie’s passion for improving the membership experience perhaps comes from his long association with and affection for the College. “The College has been a very important part of my working life,” he says. “I’ve always felt passionately about safe, high-quality care in maternity and gynaecology. And in standing for those robustly, throughout my whole career, through the College I have been able to advocate for the women we look after, and assist the College in its guidance of the NHS. This includes design of the right care based on the right evidence that must underpin all that we do.”

A solid pedigree

Eddie has held numerous key roles on College committees and workgroups, including Fellows rep on Council for the East of England, Chair of the RCOG Safety and Quality Committee, Each Baby Counts Project Board and the Online Exams Project Board. He’s also been very involved in related

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external organisations and was Chair of the British Menopause Society 2013-15. He very much supports the work of the Women’s Health Taskforce – the expert group co-chaired by Lesley Regan and Health Minister Jackie Doyle-Price – and commits to supporting the Taskforce in delivering its recommendations.

But it is RCOG members that are most important to him, whether at home or abroad. In the UK he is clear that supporting the workforce, and improving the rates of retention, will be crucial, while recognising that the RCOG is a global college which needs to be interacting with its international members. “This is an area where we could refine our focus,” he says. “We must recognise that our members deliver healthcare within their own health systems – and work out how we can improve their access to the College and make their membership something that truly supports them throughout their career.” He believes that the College’s International Representative Committees and Liaison Groups will be key to improving those interactions.

As our interview draws to a close, Eddie’s final pledge relates to research. “I’d like to find ways of effectively supporting more grassroots frontline research being performed within the specialty,” he states. “Research isn’t just for the academic powerhouses, although it’s important to recognise the research leadership and delivery that universities do. A lot of research and particularly the recruitment of many patients is performed by clinicians in hospitals all around the country. Assisted by the young, enthusiastic leaders in research on the RCOG Academic Board, I want to advocate for all the people who want to do research out there, and give them the tools to overcome any barriers.”

Eddie sees the College’s role as supporting and enabling members to get on with their jobs as part of an enjoyable career. “The public needs to know that we are appropriately trained with the right expertise,” he says. “It is the College’s job to train us, to look after us throughout our career – and also have support networks in place if things become challenging.” He clearly intends for the College not to forget that under his presidency. ●