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Royal College of  
Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

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Bringing to life the best in women's health care

13 February 2012

Dear Colleague

I wrote to you on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January outlining the position of the College Council on the Health and Social Care Bill, currently being scrutinised in the House of Lords. The past fortnight has been a busy one and I wanted to write again to update you and to seek your views.

As you will know, your Council has worked throughout the long passage of the Health and Social Care Bill to seek improvements to allow members to deliver the best possible care for women's health. We have expressed our concerns about fragmentation of services; health inequalities; education and training; and the leadership of women's health, in numerous meetings with the Prime Minister, health ministers, their advisers and officials, with parliamentarians and with members of the Future Forum.

Some weeks ago, the health unions came out against the Health Bill and over the past fortnight many Royal Medical Colleges have been reviewing their positions. The RCGP and the Faculty of Public Health are now calling for the Bill's complete withdrawal. In addition, some Colleges have accepted calls for EGMs to debate their positions.

The Health and Social Care Bill is a large and complex piece of legislation. One of its fundamental aims remains that of putting clinicians at the heart of decisions about how the NHS provides care to patients. That is why this College, with all the other Royal Colleges, initially welcomed the legislation. Unfortunately, over the past few weeks, the debate has been polarised into either being "for" or "against" the Bill.

This College still has significant concerns about parts of the Health Bill but by not calling for its complete withdrawal, we have been able to continue to meet to discuss our concerns with ministers and with the help of our supporters in the House of Lords, we have tabled amendments in the House of Lords, where changes to this legislation continue to be accepted by the Government. Were we to call for the Bill to be abandoned, your College could play no further part in improving legislation, as is now the case for those who have come out against the Health Bill.

However, as your President I have a major responsibility to you, the membership. Hence it is very important to know whether you judge our position of wide "critical engagement" over the Health Bill to be correct. Furthermore, should 20 members make a formal request, the College Council will call an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). If an EGM is called, we would of course endeavour to ensure that this is held at a time and place that allows as many people as possible the opportunity to express a view on this crucial issue with full discussion about the consequences of any action.

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Please let me know your views by emailing me at [President@rcog.org.uk](mailto:President@rcog.org.uk) .

Yours sincerely



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President