

Chair

Professor Iain Cameron
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Executive Director

Dr Katie Petty-Saphon

The Medical Schools Council was concerned to read Jo Lenaghan's HSJ quote of 3 June:

....there had been significantly higher investment in the medical workforce historically adding: "Why did we do that? I can't get an answer from anyone that that was based on patient need."

This undervalues the crucial role that doctors play in situations of clinical complexity and uncertainty, and in taking ultimate responsibility, on behalf of the healthcare team, for difficult decisions about patient care.

It is precisely because patients need well educated and well trained doctors that the UK has chosen to invest in medical education in order to optimise clinical care. Of the 152,000 responses from the general public to the NHS Plan of 2000, the overwhelming demand was for more doctors. Indeed seven day service acknowledges the importance of consultants' presence in hospitals and increasing availability of general practitioners out of hours.

Doctors also play a critical role in research and thus the development of new diagnostics and therapies. The huge advances of the recent past needed doctors' scientific and clinical knowledge and their creativity. Innovation and advances in medicine must be supported by enhanced education to improve patient care and outcomes.

The increasingly challenging nature of disease, the complexity of therapeutic interventions and the importance of multi-professional team working and its leadership are all critical elements of medical training. Education to the required level of expertise needs to be adequately funded for all health professions.

Professor Iain Cameron, Chair

On behalf of the Medical Schools Council