

PRESS RELEASE – Thursday 28th February 2008

The Department of Health's response to the Tooke Report is 'good in parts' says The Academy.

The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges gives a reserved welcome to assurances given in the Department of Health's response to the recommendations set out by Sir John Tooke in his independent and far-reaching inquiry into Modernising Medical Careers (MMC) In particular we applaud moves to strengthen health-education partnerships, effect the merger of PMETB and GMC and the clear acceptance of the need for evidence-based policy development. The Academy believes too that there is room for guarded optimism that Lord Darzi's forthcoming review will underwrite even more of Tooke's recommendations.

However, we are concerned that the proposed new body, NHS:MEE (NHS: Medical Education England) which would have resolved many of the urgent issues relating to post-graduate medical education and training has been deferred. Continued close scrutiny by the medical profession will be required to ensure a coherent and appropriate approach to medical education is adopted.

We welcome too the Department's support for a 'mixed economy' of training structures to meet the needs of individual specialities but, share Sir John Tooke's evident concern that no timetable for change has been set out in the response and that pressing decisions about the future of post-graduate medical education have either been put off or put into a box marked, 'too difficult.'

"While we are pleased that the Department of Health accepts the need to make progress on many of the recommendations set out by Sir John Tooke, it is the lack of urgency and inadequate timeline which will cause the medical profession most concern. And although the Department of Health's response is substantial, it fails to resolve many of the problems that led to the Inquiry in the first place. Those problems have not gone away, most of all for the trainees who will face continued uncertainty." said the Chair of the Academy, Professor Dame Carol Black.

Looking to the future, it is clear that there is a vigorous debate underway about the best way forward for medical education in England. The Academy will continue to work tirelessly to inform that debate and bring about changes which are in the best interests of patients and the medical profession as a whole.

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