

Opening Statement to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health

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21st March 2018

The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland(RCPI) welcomes the opportunity to inform the Committee about the work we are involved in to ensure safe prescribing.

Introduction

RCPI is Ireland's largest postgraduate medical training body with over 11,000 trainees, members, fellows and licentiates working at home and abroad. The College is committed to helping doctors to enhance their skills, competencies and professionalism throughout their working lives.

RCPI includes six of the 13 postgraduate medical training bodies; Faculty of Occupational Medicine, Faculty of Paediatrics, Faculty of Pathology, Faculty of Public Health Medicine, Institute of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and the Irish Committee on Higher Medical Training. We also have two joint faculties - the Joint Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine of Ireland with the College of Anaesthetists of Ireland and the Royal College of Surgeons (RCSI) and the Faculty of Sports and Exercise Medicine – a joint Faculty with RCSI. The college also provides lifelong learning and continuous professional development for members and allied healthcare professionals. RCPI leads 20 ground-breaking National Clinical Programmes in conjunction with the HSE that are helping to transform healthcare in Ireland and the College is also a passionate advocate to improve the health of the nation.

Medical Training and Education

The prescribing of medicines is a fundamental part of the interaction between doctors and patients and is an integral part of the postgraduate medical training programmes and professional development courses provided by RCPI. Every year, RCPI delivers over 200 courses to around 7,000 participants to equip healthcare professionals with the skills to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving society.

Our objective is to deliver world-class specialist training to the 1,200 doctors on our basic and higher postgraduate medical training programmes each year which are delivered mostly in hospitals across Ireland. These trainees are responsible for a substantial amount of prescriptions given to patients in hospitals so it is fundamental to equip them with the knowledge and skills to do this safely and effectively. All of our courses on safe prescribing are mandatory for doctors on our Basic Specialist Training programmes. They include awareness of prescription pattern monitoring and the audit of usage and effectiveness trends for prescribed medications.

All of the doctors who come to RCPI will already have some knowledge of prescribing as it falls within the remit of undergraduate medical schools. In our Basic Specialist Training programmes, safe prescribing is embedded in our curriculum and focuses on prescribing in various medical speciality areas such as obstetrics and gynaecology, general internal medicine and paediatrics. We also deliver a Clinical Pharmacology training programme for a small number of specialist doctors.

Our courses are designed to support doctors to prescribe the right dose of the right drug for the right diagnosis to the right patient at the right time. Trainees learn about the elements of safe and appropriate prescribing, adverse drug reactions, risk management and legislation related to prescribing in Ireland.

A mandatory course has also been specially developed for doctors in Haematology and Oncology that covers the essentials of chemotherapy. Doctors learn about the essentials of chemotherapy, including classification of chemotherapy agents, principles of chemotherapy, standards and the

mechanics of chemotherapy and common supportive medications, pharma-economics and drug access.

As well as safe prescribing, trainees are taught to help to combat the rise of antibiotic-resistant bacterial infections. Antibiotics are the most commonly prescribed drugs and our course outlines the general principles regarding antibiotic prescribing, the mechanism of action and spectrum of activity of commonly prescribed antibiotic, the rates of antibiotic resistance in Ireland and key aspects relating to antibiotic stewardship. This online course is approved by the National Hospital Antibiotic Stewardship Committee.

Value for money and efficiencies are addressed through an online introduction to the health economics landscape in Ireland that focusses on health service funding models, equity, cost effectiveness analysis and health technology assessments. These courses have all recently been reviewed and updated and are generally updated every 3 to 5 years.

RCPI is committed to providing world class postgraduate medical training and education for the next generation of specialists and will continue to explore how to enhance this experience in all areas, including prescribing of medicine.

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