

JEWISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION UK

(Registered Charity 269752)

EXECUTIVE CHAIR REPORT

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE 2020-21

Educational activities included several meetings and events.

Following on from the 2019-20 webinar series, the Association's programme August 2020-July 2021 included the following:

2020

Where do the children play? Israel's Covid-19 response, and the role of children - Prof Ora Paltiel
Covid 19 and the future of General Practice: "The Times they are a changin'" - Dr Ian Goodman
The impact of COVID 19 on kidneys and kidney services. Part 1 - Professor Alan Salama
Dementia 2020...where are we now? - Dr Suzanne Joels
Dying in uncertain times - Dr Adrian Tookman
Predicting Covid with 4 million citizen scientists - Prof Tim Spector
The psychology of adherence - Prof Stephen Reicher
The Covid-19 epidemic in Israel: lessons learned and cautionary tales – Prof Ora Paltiel
Social justice, health equity and Covid-19 - Prof Sir Michael Marmot
'Don't hold your breath' - Dr Nicola Marks
Best for Breast During COVID - Miss Joanna Franks
Selected health systems and policies responses to COVID-19 pandemic in Europe and Israel in the first half of 2020 –
what can we learn for the next waves? - Ruth Waitzberg
Research evidence – facts and flaws – a USA perspective - Prof Stanley J Weiss

2021

Experiences as head of WHO Advisory Group on Covid 19 - Prof David Heymann CBE
Messy lawmaking: Covid-19 lockdowns, democracy and the law - Adam Wagner
Medicine and the Holocaust: Historical Evidence, Implications for Today, Teaching for Tomorrow
- Prof Shmuel Reis
Do our genes make us Jewish; Lessons from our history and geography - Professor Alan Silman
Transmission of SARS-CoV-2 in a North London Community - Dr Michael Marks
Pandemics, communication, and women's health - Dr Brooke Vandermolen
COVID-19 vaccines roll out in Israel – what have we learned so far? - Prof Eyal Leshem
Covid and community - A year of the pandemic in Newham, East London; and what it means for the future – Dr Jason Strelitz
Precedented Times: The Rabbinic Response to Pandemics Throughout the Ages - Rabbi Edward Reichman, MD
A Kosher Approach to Improving Health Policy – Prof Orly Manor
COVID-19 vaccine trials – what still needs to be done? – Prof Saul Faust
The Art of the Possible – Dr Beverley Jacobson
What has the COVID-19 Pandemic Taught us about the US Health Care System? – Prof Sherry Glied
Antisemitism – insights from yesterday and today, lessons for now and tomorrow? - Danny Morris

OTHER EVENTS

In March 2021 a “virtual” Annual Dinner was addressed by Prof Sir Simon Baron Cohen (Director, Autism Research Centre, Cambridge University). He gave an interesting and informative talk about his recently published book “The Pattern Seekers”.

MEDICAL STUDENTS

The student Jewish Medical Association UK activities were hampered (for the second year running) by the pandemic, but nonetheless they were able to arrange several opportunities for communication not only within London but also with other medical schools. External speakers included Prof Rabbi Eddie Reichman, who spoke on medical and halachic aspects of infectious diseases, and Prof Benny Chain. The regular (weekly) clinical teaching sessions were well supported, and helped to maintain contact, as well as being of educational value. At the end of the academic year, with easing of pandemic restrictions, a summer open air picnic brought many medical students together for the first time for nearly two years. Bursary schemes for electives abroad were not feasible.

REPRESENTATION IN MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

The demand to seek knowledge and understanding of medical issues that may affect Jews continued both from within the UK Jewish community itself, and from the wider community. The added dimension was that the roll out of Covid 19 vaccination required special consideration. There were problems about acceptance of the vaccine, chiefly but not exclusively in the strictly orthodox parts of the UK Jewish community. Individual members of the Association were very active in this field promoting uptake. Simultaneously documents that were distributed amongst all faith communities were constantly under review and required frequent updates. There was also an ongoing need to make sure that “routine” childhood immunisations were not neglected.

During the latter part of 2020 the Association helped disseminate information about best practices for care homes to cope with the pandemic and provided support and advice to Association members who were concerned about the health safety in “mikvaot” (ritual baths). Burial practices were monitored, and advice on these was provided not only in the UK but also to the burial societies of Jewish communities in European countries.

Demographic monitoring by community organisations was supported so that accurate data would be available. The NHS Race and Health Observatory agreed to consider communication with the Jewish community based upon their recognition that antisemitism is a pernicious form of racism; and the BMA issued a statement re-affirming its opposition to antisemitism. During the year there were several episodes where Jewish doctors and medical students encountered antisemitic comments, which was in person, in public correspondence and on social media. A complaint was made to the General Medical Council (GMC) on behalf of four doctors who had received online messages (as part of their What’s App groups) that they considered to be antisemitic.

Projects to increase links between UK and Israeli medicine via exchange visits were still not feasible, but there was Israeli contribution to the webinar series as outlined above.

The Association was represented at the NHS England Religious Equality group, the GMC Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Strategy Group and the Black and Minority Ethnic Forum, where the Association (along with others) has emphasised the intersectionality of faith and ethnicity, alongside other protected characteristics.