

## **The Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists Update - February 2003**

This is my first report for the Council in my new role as Honorary Chair of RCCP. As many of you will already be aware, Dr Sue Hill, now the Chief Scientific Officer at the Department of Health, on taking up her new post, had to resign from RCCP. I am sure you will all join with me in thanking her for all of the hard work and commitment she has shown to this endeavour and to wish her well in her challenging new role.

I have been on Council since its inception. I was previously Vice Chair of RCCP and Chair of Education for RCCP, so I do have some experience to draw upon. The Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists is coming into its third year of operation. We now have well over 2000 registrants and this number is increasing daily. Your representatives on Council are working very hard [on a voluntary basis] to achieve our aim of State Registration. Despite the very heavy workload involved, we are all still one hundred per cent committed to Clinical Physiology achieving that goal.

### **Visit to Health Professions Council [HPC]**

Members of RCCP recently met with Professor Brook the President, Marc Seale the Chief Executive and Registrar, and Cathy Savage a Director of HPC. HPC is still awaiting instruction from Privy Council before they become fully operational in April. At the meeting, we discussed in detail the draft criteria for new entrants applying to HPC. The criteria are very clear and RCCP Council members have no doubt that we as a group fully meet these criteria. HPC will be sending us full details of the new application process in March and we intend to go forward in our application with all speed on your behalf.

One issue under discussion within HPC, is the number of groups who wish to go forward for State Registration. As you may be aware the ethos of HPC is that their Council should be small and effective, consisting of both practitioners and lay members. The possibility of unregulated groups of staff in Health Care Science [HCS] coming together for registration under one banner was discussed. This format is also favoured by the Department of Health (DoH), who intends to pursue this course of action with all groups within Health Care Science. HPC reassured us that there was no reason why groups, such as RCCP, who are currently ready to be regulated, should experience any delay. Therefore, once all the documentation is complete, we plan to pursue our application for State Registration.

Part of the process of application is transparency of information and evidence of good communication. RCCP will therefore be required to update all Clinical Physiologists on the consequences of the petition and to organise an independent ballot. *This will be a matter of urgency and RCCP would be very grateful if, when you receive your ballot paper, you would please vote and return it as soon as possible.* Not responding will be detrimental to the process.

HPC were unable to tell us how long the process, once started, is likely to take as some of the procedure is out of their control. However, once they have received orders, they plan to receive applications for new groups. Crafting the legislation for new groups will be the responsibility of the Department of Health.

Some issues pertinent to Voluntary Registration were clarified with HPC. It is now clear that registration will be under the collective group name, 'Clinical Physiology' at present, and will not specify modality. They will however carry the caveat that **"it is every registrants duty, as set out in the Statement of Good Conduct, Character and Health, to practise only within their professional competence"**. RCCP will issue registration certificates as before showing registration as a Clinical Physiologist. The database report, which every registrant also receives, will continue to show the principal area of work under which each registrant was assessed. There will therefore no longer be a need for dual modality registration and indeed HPC will not have a mechanism for such registrations. Whilst every effort is made to minimise the changes to RCCP guidance it would be foolhardy not to heed HPC advice. Therefore new registrants should apply under their principal area of work even though we recognise that they may work in other areas of clinical physiology. RCCP have also approached the Department of Health with a view to obtaining their views on the application.

***RCCP would ask that all registrants would be proactive in encouraging other Healthcare Practitioners within their Trusts and Professional Groups to get onto this register.***

**It is my opinion that it is important for all practitioners within Clinical Physiology to realise that there is a clear intention from all interested parties to regulate all in Health Care Science, as they have the potential to harm patients. This definitely includes Clinical Physiologists and will happen.**

### **Education**

The BSc (Hons) in Clinical Physiology and also in Audiology began in several centres in September 2002 and there are now many students going through the system.

### **BSc [Hons] Clinical Physiology [Cardiology, GI Physiology, Neurophysiology and Respiratory Physiology]**

The following Education Providers started the vocational Honours Degree in Clinical Physiology in September 2002:-

1. City of Westminster College, London
2. Peoples' College of Further Education, Nottingham and De Montfort University
3. University of Wales, Swansea
4. University of Sunderland

Other providers are, we know, in the process of developing the Vocational Clinical Physiology Degree and plan to offer the qualification from 2003. Most of the new education providers are allowing access onto year 3 of the degree with a 'current' HND in MPPM [or equiv qualifications] and a professional body qualification in the candidate's specialist area.

These vocational qualifications were developed by the professional bodies in conjunction with a group of educational providers and herald a big change, combining both the academic and professional aspects of our current qualifications [Professional Body examinations]. These changes will take time to bed down and may even cause some frustration in the initial stages. But when we discussed our educational pathway with HPC they were convinced this was the right approach. To facilitate these changes RCCP have a very active education committee consisting of Education Representatives from all the Professional Bodies. I am sure they would welcome feedback, in writing, on any aspect of the educational changes.

RCCP Professional Body Education Committee has already started the accreditation process for the Clinical Physiology Degrees; this will be extended to the Audiology degree. The following Education Providers have been successful in obtaining RCCP accreditation for the delivery of the BSc [Hons] Degree in Clinical Physiology:-

City of Westminster College, London

University of Wales, Swansea

University of Sunderland are currently going through the accreditation process. Nottingham/De Montfort are about to apply for accreditation.

**A note of caution: A degree bearing the name of Clinical Physiology is not necessarily the true vocational degree that RCCP will accredit. It is advisable before starting trainees on a course check the status of that course. Regular updates of accredited centres will be made available to you all through your professional bodies and the RCCP website: [www.rccp.co.uk](http://www.rccp.co.uk).**

### **BSc [Hons] Audiology**

Future education for practice in audiology and hearing therapy has been combined in line with a new career structure. The BSc Hons (Audiology) programme will encompass the basic aspects necessary to all practitioners in the field of audiology. This will be a four-year full time course with the third year being clinical practice. The British Association of Audiologists (BAAT), British Association of Audiological Scientists (BAAS) and British Society of Hearing Therapists (BSHT) plan to amalgamate in the near future. Negotiations are also continuing with the private sector. An accreditation board is already operating from the combined groups. Work Force Planning issues are co-ordinated by a committee chaired by a representative of the DoH.

The first two university providers for the new course commenced programmes in September 2002:  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
De Montfort University

A further four universities have been appointed by DoH to offer the course in 2003:  
University College London  
Aston University  
University of Bristol  
University of Southampton

Other courses in Swansea and hopefully in Scotland will be adapted to meet the requirements at the time when the BSc programme becomes the mandatory qualification for practice in Audiology. Further work has been undertaken to look at routes involving post-graduate diploma and fast track MSc. Specialist and advanced work will be facilitated by MSc level education and competencies. In order to accommodate the increased capacity needed in NHS Audiology existing training routes are being maintained to run collaterally with the degree programme.

### **Finance**

RCCP is now entering its third year of registration. At its inauguration the participating professional bodies injected capital to allow the Registration Council to be established within a legal framework and to support the administration required during that first year as well as set fees at the lowest possible amount (£12) for the first year.

The current registration fee is £15.00 per annum and the Council has decided to retain this level for re-registration in the year commencing April 2003. However, as the administrative cost for new applications is £20, this cost has to be passed on. In addition the registration fee for new applicants will be increased to £20 to help meet the cost of petitioning HPC. Therefore the charge for **new applicants will be £40 in total.**

**RCCP strongly advise all practitioners in the field of clinical physiology not already on the voluntary register to apply with a degree of urgency. In particular it will have financial implications for practitioners who need to enter via the grandparenting route. Once Clinical Physiologists become a state registered group all members on the voluntary register will be transferred to HPC automatically without any additional administration fee for the 'Grandfathering' process. Applicants entering via the grandparenting route after that date will be subject to a fee set by Health Professional's Council. (Currently from £110 to £290 which is in addition to the fee)**

### **Next Steps**

- RCCP to make the case for Statutory Regulation of Clinical Physiologists on receipt of the new documentation from HPC
- Ballot practitioners in Clinical Physiology
- Encourage potential registrants to apply to RCCP
- Continue to operate the voluntary register until we have successfully achieved State Registration
- Encourage the development, support and monitoring of the new accredited Clinical Physiology and Audiology BSc (Hons) degrees
- Carry out activities such as promotion of State Registration
- ALL PRACTITIONERS –need to participate in these activities as far as possible.



**Anne Burge**