



MEDICO-LEGAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Introduction

1. This has been another busy but, I hope, productive year for the Society. Over the course of the year the Society has welcomed 52 new members and held eight meetings. There have also been two print editions of the Society's Journal and a large number of original articles, editorials and reviews have also been made available online to members and, through Sage Publishing, to the wider public.
2. I need to record the Society's appreciation of the work done by Diana Brahams, the General Editor of the Journal and Dr. Jane Turner, its Medical Editor. After 91 years, the Journal continues to showcase the very best of what the Society can offer to its members and to all those interested in medical-legal issues.

Remote attendance at meetings and recordings

3. The Society has continued to provide facilities for members to attend meetings remotely. Members tell me that they welcome this option although there is still room for improvement. There are still some issues with the sound which we hope will be addressed over the summer but several members have contacted me to say that they enjoy being able to attend meetings remotely and using the "breakout room" which the Society has introduced to enable members attending remotely to talk to each other.
4. The recording of each meeting is uploaded to the Society's You Tube platform. This is available to members to view via the website at a time and in a manner of their choosing. The Society is hugely grateful to Malcolm Brahams both for his assistance at meetings and for the time subsequently spent by him editing and uploading the recordings.

Promotion of the Society

5. The Society continues to promote itself on various social media platforms including X (@MedicoLondon) where it has 427 followers and also LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/the-medico-legal-society/?viewAsMember=true>) with, at the date of this report, 830 followers.
6. All members of the Society can play a part in this. If you do not already follow the Society on one or both of these platforms, please do so. Even if you do no more than re-post the items that appear on these platforms, this will help to bring the Society and all that it has to offer to the attention of a wider audience.

Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements

7. The Honorary Treasurer will speak to the accounts at the annual general meeting (“AGM”). However, in summary, at a time when costs are increasing, some very significantly, the Society is still managing, just about, to operate within its budget.
8. This is due in very large part to the watchful stewardship of the Honorary Treasurer, Anne Raikes, who is retiring after six years in the post. Again, I need to record my and the Society’s thanks for everything that Anne Raikes has done during her time as Honorary Treasurer.

Amendment to the Rules of the Society

9. Anne Raikes and Evelyn Palmer will be standing down after the AGM as respectively Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Legal Secretary. By §9 of the current Rules, the Society elects a person “*from any Ordinary Members willing to act ... as successor*”. However, the Society has traditionally elected as its Treasurer a person with accounting or other financial skills. As such, they not likely to satisfy the criteria for Ordinary Members. These are defined in §19(2)(a) as “*persons who are qualified, in-training, or academic members of the legal profession or of legally-related professions; and/or of the medical profession or of medically-related professions*”.
10. Similarly, it has been necessary to look outside the Society for a successor to Evelyn Palmer. It is therefore proposed in the draft amended Rules to exempt both these Honorary Officers from the requirement to be an Ordinary Member of the Society as the Rules currently require.
11. In addition, the Council of the Society (“Council”) has approved a proposal for there to be a single Honorary Secretary from 1 July 2024 rather than an Honorary Medical Secretary and an Honorary Legal Secretary as at present. The draft amended Rules include this proposed change.
12. Finally, at the AGM the Society will be invited to elect four new members of Council. By §16(1)(c) of the Rules, Council consists of the Trustees, the Honorary Officers and “*nine Ordinary Members of the Society*”. The proposal is to amend the Rules so that if elected at the AGM, a student member can in future serve on Council.
13. The full draft amended Rules will be circulated with the papers for the AGM. These have been considered and approved by both the Society’s Trustees and by Council.
14. I cannot leave this topic without acknowledging the debt which I and the Society owe to Professor Rachael Mulheron who has again assumed the burden of drafting the proposed amended Rules to ensure that they are compliant with requirements of the Charity Commission.

Election and Re-Election of Trustee, Honorary Officers and Members of the Council of the Society

15. The Society currently has two medical and two legal Trustees in addition to the President and the Honorary Treasurer. Council has nominated Dr. James Pattison, currently a member of Council, to serve as a medical Trustee from 1 July 2024. At the AGM the Society will be invited to elect James Pattison as a Trustee of the Society.

16. My term of office as President ends on 30 June 2024. It is a longstanding tradition of the Society that the presidency alternates between a medical and a legal professional. Council has nominated Dr. Sarah Galbraith, currently a Trustee, to serve as President from 1 July 2024. At the AGM the Society will be invited to elect Sarah Galbraith as the Society's next President.
17. Anne Raikes and Evelyn Palmer will be standing down after the AGM as respectively Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Legal Secretary. The Society is invited to elect in their place from 1 July 2024 Michael Owen and Hazel Cameron both of whom have been nominated for election by Council.
18. Lawrence Melinek currently acts as the Independent Examiner of the Society. He has agreed to be re-appointed for a further year and has been duly nominated by Council. At the AGM the Society will be invited to re-elect Lawrence Melinek as the Society's Independent Examiner from 1 July 2024.
19. In April 2024 expressions of interest to serve on Council were invited from members of the Society. Council has nominated Anjali Keeping, Skye Blackshaw and Ingrid Bifar for election to Council. At the AGM the Society will be invited to elect Anjali Keeping, Skye Blackshaw and Ingrid Bifar as members of Council from 1 July 2024.
20. I have been invited to continue to serve on Council when my term as President ends on 30 June 2024. Having been nominated by Council, I am therefore also seeking election at the AGM as a member of Council from 1 July 2024.
21. Brief details of all the candidates seeking election or re-election will be circulated with the papers for the AGM.

Safeguarding

22. The Society's recent engagement with the Charity Commission in relation to the Rules of the Society has highlighted the current guidance from the Charity Commission about safeguarding policies. It is suggested that as a matter of "*best practice*" all charities should have a document dealing with matters such as culture (for honorary officers and members including younger members), personal data and online services including the content of presentations and what is accessible via the website.
23. Professor Rachael Mulheron (to whom once again I am very grateful) has therefore drafted a proposed safeguarding policy. It is a short document which focuses upon the particular risks that the Society might face but ignores everything else. This has been considered and approved by the Society's Trustees and by Council. At the AGM the Society will be invited to adopt this policy, a copy of which will be circulated with the papers for the AGM.

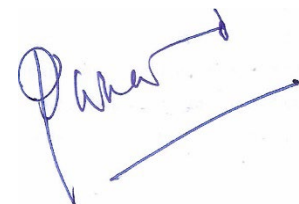
Annual dinner

24. The Society's annual dinner is on 20 June 2024 at the Army and Navy Club in London. Further information is available on the website. This is the Society's big event of the year and, in accordance with its longstanding tradition, the Society has invited an eminent doctor and lawyer to propose the toasts to respectively the law and medicine. This year's speakers are Baroness Finlay of Llandaff and Baron Faulks of Donnington KC.

25. Every effort has been made to keep costs as low as possible. As a result, the ticket price for this year's dinner is less than it was last year. I would urge all members of the Society, but particularly younger members, to attend what is always an entertaining and welcoming evening. Reserving and paying for a ticket is quick and simple and can be done through the Society's website. Please note that the last day for booking is Sunday 16 June 2024.

Finally ...

26. A large number of people have given generously of their time during the year to assist with the Society's activities. I am hugely grateful to the Trustees, to the Honorary Officers, to the members of Council and to Annie Girling, the Society's very efficient membership administrator, for all their hard work in what has been a busy year.
27. Professor Harry Zeitlin and Charles Bennett are stepping down from Council on 30 June 2024. Professor Zeitlin has also previously served as the Medical Editor of the Journal and as the President of the Society between 2020 and 2022. I need to record my thanks and the thanks of the Society for everything that each of them has done over a great many years.
28. I also need to make special mention of the Society's Honorary Legal Secretary, Evelyn Palmer, who is also retiring on 30 June 2024. Evelyn Palmer stepped uncomplainingly into this role at short notice when Sandra Marcantonio became ill. Since then she has performed the duties of Honorary Legal Secretary quietly, courteously but very effectively. The Society and, in particular, its current President are and will remain enormously grateful to her.
29. Lastly, I would like to thank all members of the Society for the support that they have given me over the past two years. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to have served as President.



Simon Readhead KC
President
10 June 2024