12 January 2021

Supporting doctors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic

Dear Colleagues

This year has started in a way we could all have barely imagined 12 months ago, and we wanted to write to thank all of you for your immense efforts. After the long ordeal of last year, we enter the New Year with the real hope that vaccination offers to control COVID and the very substantial impact that it has had on health, lives and livelihoods but with a significant surge in cases to deal with before that begins to take effect.

There are many weeks ahead that are likely to be among the most challenging of all our professional lives. Doctors will be faced with many professional dilemmas and some may be pushed to the limits of physical and mental endurance. Please look after your colleagues - protracted, relentless crises are often much more draining than short intense ones.

We wrote to you during the first wave of COVID-19 last Spring and again in the Autumn when infections once again began to rise. Those letters contained important advice concerning the application of clinical decisions in extreme circumstances and we would encourage you to read them if you have not already done so. We also append them for your information.

Our view remains that clinical decision making must remain anchored in the principles of Good Medical Practice. This means it must also rightly take into account the realities of the situation in which we find ourselves. We would emphasise once again that a rational approach to varying practice in an emergency is part of a doctor's professional response, and we would expect you to be professionally supported to do this. Many doctors are as a result of this emergency working in new ways, new areas of medicine and taking decisions in a way they would not under normal conditions, and this should be expected and professionally supported.

All medical leaders have huge confidence in the ability and judgement of all our colleagues to meet these challenges. We have been inspired by the passion and commitment of doctors working in all roles throughout the pandemic. This will not be easy and we continue to express our enormous gratitude for all you are doing.

We stand with you professionally at this time.



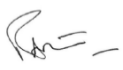
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