

Why is this Important for GP services now: View from a Clinical Commissioning Group Clinical Chair

In the context of a NHS under severe pressure and financial strain, there is a lot of competition for 'burning platforms'. However there is a powerful case to be made for the crisis in General Practice being right at the top of the worry list. Frequently described as the 'jewel in the crown' of the NHS, there is an established consensus that a high functioning primary care system is necessary for a high functioning, high quality, efficient health service.

What is often less clear however, are some of the solutions to the problems that we face collectively. Those problems include, but are not restricted to; resourcing; workforce; the model of care; and modernizing the service without losing its power. This digest goes some way to helping move the discussion from the articulation of problems, to the identification of real world solutions.

In this environment, there is understandably a pressure to 'do something.' This, combined with many opinions and some questionable political fashions, has the risk of jumping to answers that either aren't addressing the right questions, or have the potential to make things worse. Whilst we need to avoid the trap of waiting for perfect evidence, the first thing we should do is to look at what we have got and what we already know. The NHS should be ideally placed for taking the best evidence and applying it widely, but too often we tend to look only at what we already know from our experience, and try to develop solutions de novo.

There is a lot in these pages that is highly applicable, both to commissioners and providers, but also to individual healthcare professionals and GP practices. It is clear we need to understand a lot more about what the future holds, and in the current context it is even more vital that we base this on sound evidence, building closer links between academic work and real world clinical work, developing a genuinely shared agenda.

Dr. Joe McManners

Clinical chair Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
GP partner Manor surgery, Headington, Oxford.