

# HE ♥ RT

The **RMBF** Newsletter

## Dr Mike on a Bike

Junior doc's round-the-world cycle challenge

On 9 February, outside Buckingham Palace, junior doctor Michael Nally - AKA Dr Mike on a Bike - mounted his trusty green bicycle and set off on the first stretch of a 19,000-mile, globe-spanning journey to raise money for the RMBF and Mind.

The Brighton-based doctor chose to undertake the challenge, which will take him through 22 countries over the course of eight months, as a way to support colleagues working under increasing stress and pressure.

Mike has so far had to contend with steep climbs, traffic, narrow roads and worst of all, a bike malfunction 30 miles outside Istanbul, the intended finish line of the journey's first leg.

While Mike's family were able to meet him in Istanbul for some moral support, taking time to fix the bike meant a change of plan, with a new route mapped out that would take him via Baku, Azerbaijan.

Thankfully, he won't be alone the entire time, as Istanbul also saw a rendezvous with good friend and fellow doctor Charlie, who will be joining Mike on



the route to Baku and then for leg two, through India, Myanmar and Malaysia.

Up next after Asia are Australia and New Zealand, then a mammoth, 4,500-mile leg through the US and Canada, this time joined by another friend and colleague Will. With home in sight, they'll cross the Atlantic and return to London through Portugal, Spain and France.

We will of course keep you updated on his progress in this newsletter, and on pages 4-5 you can read more about Mike's reasons for taking on this challenge, and his hopes and fears for the trip.

### In this issue

- 2 CEO update
- 3 How your support makes a difference
- 4 Q&A with Dr Mike
- 5 An update from Baku, Azerbaijan
- 6 First RMBF Local Fundraising Open Day
- 7 Our Royal Patronage; Spring Guild events
- 8 Donation & contact form

**Help Mike raise £20,000 - donate at**  
**[virginmoneygiving.com/drmikeonabike](https://virginmoneygiving.com/drmikeonabike)**

# CEO update

Steve Crone | RMBF Chief Executive



## The landscape of the medical profession is undeniably complex.

It takes a diverse range of organisations to ensure we have effective regulation, education, protection and support for both doctors and patients. As a charity, one of the most effective ways we can make a difference to doctors and medical students in need is by collaborating with others: ensuring that as organisations and as individuals we share knowledge, expertise and best practice. By teaming up to take on the big challenges and pressing issues facing the profession, we stand the best chance of achieving lasting change.

## Reviving the mess

As part of our *Together for Doctors* campaign survey, we asked over 1,800 doctors what key changes would make a positive difference to their working day. As well as administration support and better rostering, having access to a communal staff room or relaxing area was one of the most popular responses. Many are concerned about how the Doctors' Mess, which was for so long an integral part of the fabric of medical life, has gradually fallen out of use.

We are exploring ways that we can support the revival of the Doctors' Mess, or an equivalent space suited to the modern profession. I am pleased to say we have already had encouraging discussions with other key organisations whose support will make a big difference to this project.

## Unmet need

One of the most significant ways in which we are looking to improve the RMBF's effectiveness is by better understanding the levels of unmet need for support among UK doctors and medical students. We are under no illusions about the challenges of answering such a big question, and as such we are carefully laying the foundations for thorough, high-quality research.

This will again involve collaboration and communication with other groups and

organisations, to ensure we are not duplicating work. The research itself will be undertaken by an academic research group with a proven track record, and guided by the experience of our Trustees, staff and volunteers. We expect this project to have a significant impact on the shape of the charity's future work, helping us to provide those most in need with the most appropriate forms of support.

## DocHealth update

A very successful recent example of organisations working together is of course DocHealth, the confidential psychotherapeutic service for doctors jointly supported by the RMBF and the BMA. Since its launch in 2016, the service has proved both effective and sorely needed. 485 doctors have now self-referred to DocHealth, and 92% say that they would recommend it to others.

The service was also mentioned as a very useful resource for mental health among doctors in an insightful essay recently featured in the BMJ by Dr Caroline Elton, author of *Also Human* and a guest speaker at our AGM last year.

## Super students

It is sometimes surprising to remember that our medical student support programme only began in 2012 – it now feels like such a natural part of our work. Since then, with your help, we have been able to provide vital assistance

to hundreds of medical students in hardship, helping them to pass their exams and qualify as new doctors. Not only that, we have gained really valuable insight into the pressures facing younger members of the profession by working with, and learning from, those at the outset of their medical careers.

I look forward to the next meeting of our Medical Student Advisory Group in June, where we will be discussing the development of improved online resources for medical students, and the recruitment of more Student Medical Liaison Officers, who have had an enormous impact in spreading the word of the support we can offer.

I would also like to thank everyone who supported the launch of our *Med Students Matter* campaign in November. Our President, Professor Dame Parveen Kumar, was interviewed about the pressures facing medical students on Talk Radio, and the findings of our research, showing that two-thirds of medical students have faced financial or mental health pressures, were widely reported in the medical press, including a great piece in the BMJ.

The campaign also made a splash online, with our video case studies viewed thousands of times on Facebook. I'm very grateful to everyone who helped make the campaign a success, but especially to Victoria and Belal for

sharing their stories, and to the Medical Student Advisory Group for their invaluable input and enthusiasm.

### In the pipeline

We are also very pleased to let you know that a new partnership between the RMBF and the Association of Anaesthetists will be launching very soon. The Association of Anaesthetists have kindly supported the work of the RMBF for many years, and we are delighted to be teaming up to promote greater wellbeing and awareness of support for doctors amongst members of the specialty. More to follow later this year!

Something else to look forward to in the near future is our second-ever Volunteer Conference. Our first event in Birmingham in 2017 was a great success, with volunteers from across the country coming together to help shape our future work. It is very important to us that the next event builds on that success and carries on the momentum. Please look out for more details in the very near future.

### A big thank you

One of the most effective and direct ways that you, our supporters, come together to help the profession is by generously donating to our President's

Appeal each year. On behalf of Professor Dame Parveen Kumar, I would like to convey our deepest thanks to you for making this another successful appeal, as you raised over £78,000 to support doctors and medical students in need.

Our aim over the course of 2019-20 is to double the number of doctors and medical students who we can help back to work or study, and your kind donations are already helping us to achieve that ambitious but incredibly important goal.

With all best wishes,

**Steve**

## The difference your support makes

### In the words of our beneficiaries

"Since November last year, as well as having to handle my health issues, money worries have been at the forefront of my thoughts. This award will allow me to fully focus on my rehabilitation as I aim to get back to training as soon as I can."

"Every single day I am grateful for the charitable benefactors who made this possible, and continue to do so."

"Many thanks for the ongoing support. I really can't express the stress and pressure it takes from me."

"I am writing to let you know that I have just passed my final exams. I want to thank you for all the help that you have given me, this success would not have been possible without it. I am over the moon that I've finally realised my dream of becoming a doctor."





# Q&A: Dr Mike on a Bike

Before setting out on his mammoth round-the-world trip (see front page), Dr Michael Nally kindly took some time out of his busy schedule of work, preparation and training to tell us about his reasons for taking on the challenge and his hopes and fears for the trip.

## What do you want to achieve by cycling around the world as a junior doctor?

My first goal is to raise money and awareness for the increasing numbers of doctors under stress and pressure. There are so many positives to being a doctor, and being the person people turn to when they need mending. I want people to know that sometimes doctors need mending too, and if just one doctor can get some help as a result of me cycling round the world it will be worth it.

My second goal is to be a positive voice for medicine as a career. I'd love to have medical students following the trip, thinking 'there's a guy who loves his job!' The press can be so negative, so it's important to have positive voices out there. I'd like to be something of a champion for medicine – being open about the good and the bad.

It's really important to be able to remember the great parts about being a doctor when dealing with stress and struggles. When something bad happens, so long as you know you're doing the best job you can, it makes it a little easier to manage. If you already feel disheartened, with no concrete foundations of why you are doing what you are doing, you are less likely to be able to cope or ask for the help you need to bounce back.



*In training with close friend Charlie, who'll join Mike for stretches of the trip*

## How did you find out about the RMBF?

I wanted to find a charity that supported doctors and I started asking around. Professor Deborah Gill, Director of UCL Medical School, was always a champion for the importance of mental health and wellbeing among the students, and she suggested I look into the RMBF. As soon as I visited the website, I remember it feeling like the perfect fit. It really hit the nail on the head. The RMBF helps all kinds of doctors in difficulty, and they understand the mental health pressures too.

Watching the videos of people's personal stories really highlighted the fantastic work that the RMBF does. I was surprised that I hadn't heard of the charity before, and it turned out most of my friends hadn't either. They all know now, though – they're wearing the t-shirts!

## What inspired you to cycle round the world?

I've always had a real affection for cycling. Dad and I were late starters when it came to driving, so we were often on our bikes instead. Wind, rain or shine, I was always on my bike, whether it was going to a rugby match or into town to see friends. Then more recently I heard incredible stories of people biking round the world. There was Mark Beaumont, the current world record holder, who cycled 240 miles a day for 78 days. And there was Alastair Humphreys, who was on the road for 4 years and has written some great books about his travels. I had this feeling that it was something I would always have an urge to do, and now seemed as good a time as any!

A bike builder in India said that "the world treats you in a different way when you are on a bike." I think there's a lot of truth in that. Cycling has all the



benefits of walking, but quicker. You can do some serious distance on a bike, and at the same time still be able to really experience the places you are travelling through.

## How far will you be cycling?

In all, I'll be doing 19,000 miles through 22 countries. I'll be doing 80 miles a day for half the trip and then 100-110 miles a day for the other half. Usually it will be 6 days on the bike and 1 day off, though I'll probably cycle on those days to shave off a few miles from the following week. India should be interesting: 80 miles a day in 40-degree heat will certainly be a challenge!

## What are you most excited about and what are you most apprehensive about?

I'm most excited about not having to think an awful lot. Once I set off, that's it. I'll just follow my nose and keep cycling. It should be a more simple life: every day, I'll just get on my bike and go. In life there are so many things to juggle, so for 8 months, I'll just be seeing the world and meeting new people. I can be a bit shy and awkward with new people at times so I'm hoping this will break me out of my shell.

I'm most apprehensive about the start. I do feel a bit underprepared and if something goes wrong in the middle of winter in Albania, or in far north India where you don't get many tourists, it could be very serious. That said, I've never done anything like this before, so ultimately I don't know what to expect.

One thing I'm certain about is loneliness. Even though it's nice to be on your own, and be alone with your thoughts, it will be tough to cope with isolation for such long periods. It's nice to be able to share and offload with other people, and for long stretches that won't be a possibility!

#### **Why do you think it's important to champion having a career in medicine?**

For most of my life medicine has been the only career I wanted to do. When I was younger, I wanted to be a paediatrician and work with children. Then when I went to med school, I felt on top of the world. It was only as I got towards the end of my degree that I felt that excitement start to waver. I was spending more time in hospitals and a lot of the doctors would be telling me, 'oh, it's tough' or 'you should have gone to work in the city' which can be quite disheartening. But since I started as a trainee, I've had the best time. I feel so lucky to do what I do, and I feel incredibly passionate about medicine as a career, even if I'm still not certain exactly which direction I want to go in. It really gets me down seeing colleagues feeling low and disheartened, and not finding joy in what they do. I hold on to the fact that deep down, I love what I do and I know that medicine is right for me.

## **"If just one doctor can get some help as a result, it will be worth it."**

#### **What would you say to a fellow doctor who is struggling?**

Speak to someone. The worst thing is to feel weighed down and to try to deal with it yourself. I know when I've had issues, I've found it really helpful to talk to someone. Otherwise the pressure just builds and builds.

#### **How can people support you?**

The biggest thing people can do is to make a donation. It will really drive me on seeing how close I can get to £20,000! I've self-funded the whole trip from start to finish, so any money I raise will go straight towards supporting the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund and Mind.

Secondly, any words of support on Twitter and Facebook will mean a lot. If anyone feels like we have changed the dialogue or helped them in some way it would be great to hear from them. I'm

going to be on my own a lot, so getting those messages on social media will be great.

#### **What will you miss most?**

I'm going to be very lonely, so I'll miss my girlfriend Jolie, my family and my friends the most. In my head, once I set off every time I pedal I'll be bringing myself one step closer to home, so that's how I'm going to look at it.

#### **What's the one thing that you won't be leaving without?**

I will have my lucky mascot Gemima, a stuffed penguin, taking pride of place on my handlebars. Other than that I'd like an endless supply of freshly baked M&S cookies, but that may be wishful thinking!

### **Sponsor Dr Mike**

[www.virginmoneygiving.com/drmikeonabike](http://www.virginmoneygiving.com/drmikeonabike)

### **Support Dr Mike on social media**

[www.twitter.com/drmikeonabike](https://www.twitter.com/drmikeonabike)  
[www.instagram.com/drmikeonabike](https://www.instagram.com/drmikeonabike)  
[www.facebook.com/drmikeonabike](https://www.facebook.com/drmikeonabike)  
[www.drmikeonabike.com](http://www.drmikeonabike.com)

# **"Hello from Azerbaijan!"**

An update from Mike on month three of his trip



**"After an unbelievable 61 days on the road** I have arrived in Baku, which marks the end of the first stage of this round-the-world challenge. We have covered 6,650 kilometres through every weather condition you could imagine, from a winter heatwave in Croatia to the bitterly cold spring snowstorms of north-eastern Turkey.

"I would be lying if I said it has been easy, but every day I'm thankful that I have the opportunity to do something like this. I've been completely bowled over by the support I have received from the medical community back at home. Not just from friends and colleagues, but from complete strangers who have taken the time to donate and even send through messages of support.

"With each act of kindness, I am reminded of how fortunate I am to be a part of such a supportive profession. So thank you to everyone back at home. We are just about to fly to New Delhi to begin stage two, which will be a whole new challenge in itself!"



# First ever Local Fundraising Open Day brings volunteers together

In February, RMBF staff and volunteers, including Guild officers, met at our Wimbledon office for the inaugural RMBF Local Fundraising Open Day.

## Meeting the team

Fundraising activities are vital to the RMBF's work to support doctors and medical students in crisis. This day was a chance to celebrate our Guilds' fundraising successes, share ideas, top tips and best practice, and forge closer links between the team at HQ and our volunteers nationwide.

The day was organised and led by Charlotte Ward, the RMBF's new Community & Events Fundraising Officer. After an introduction from Chief Executive Steve Crone, attendees set off on one of the day's most enjoyable activities: a "Meet the team" quiz. Visiting different departments and staff members around the RMBF office, teams found out about how the charity works day-to-day, our ongoing and recent projects, and the organisation's history.

## Challenges and successes

The afternoon session saw a lively discussion about past fundraising events and plans for the future, with many excellent ideas arising. They included a plan to attract new supporters and fundraising groups with a series of nationwide events that bring together



doctors, medical students and volunteers in their local area.

## New handbook

We also shared with attendees the draft of a new resource: our Local Fundraising Handbook (below right), which contains ideas and inspiration for events, as well as plenty of practical advice and tips about organising your own fundraising events. We are glad to say that this guide is now available to download from the website, and printed copies are free on request – just email [info@rmbf.org](mailto:info@rmbf.org) or call 020 8545 8441 (Option 2) to get hold of them.

## Looking ahead

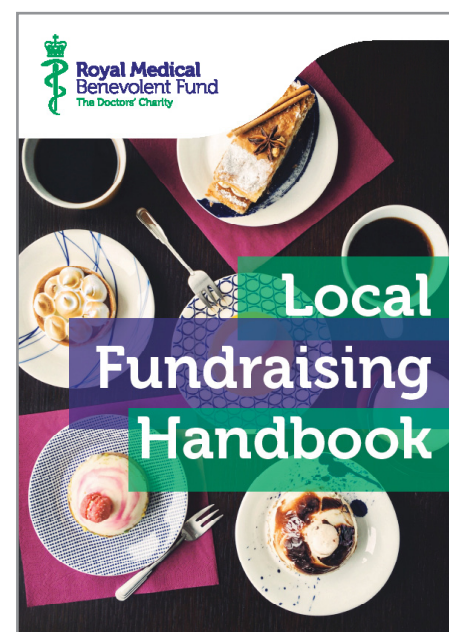
We are extremely grateful to everyone who attended and shared their fundraising ideas and experience.

We are holding a follow-up event later this year, and we hope you'll be able to

join us – remember, you don't have to be an RMBF Guild officer or volunteer to join in! Local fundraising can be an immensely rewarding and social activity, as well as helping us to provide vital support in times of desperate need for doctors and medical students.

If you are interested in attending a future Local Fundraising Open Day, or other Guild activities in your local area, please get in touch with Charlotte on [cward@rmbf.org](mailto:cward@rmbf.org) or 020 8545 9946.

Whether you are already involved in a Guild or local fundraising group, or you are just starting out with your own activities, we look forward to hearing from you!



# Our history of Royal Patronage

The RMBF has been extremely fortunate to have the support and patronage of the Royal Family over the last 180 years – here we take a brief look back at this rich history.

This May marks the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of **Queen Victoria**, who was one of our first major benefactors. In 1871, HRH the Prince of Wales, Victoria's eldest son, had become dangerously ill with typhoid. On his much-celebrated recovery, our then President, Sir George Burrows, issued an appeal setting out the objects of the charity – then still known as the British Medical Benevolent Fund – which was carried by the newspapers. As a result, Queen Victoria graciously contributed £100, followed by a further £200, to the charity's work.

Royal Patronage was granted by **King George V** on 12 July 1912, when the charity became the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund. At this point the fund



had been established for 77 years, and had distributed over £160,000 and helped more than 9,000 poverty-stricken members of the medical profession.

**Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother** was a Patron and supporter of the Ladies' Guild of the RMBF from 1927-1972. The picture above right shows her in attendance at one of the Ladies' Guild events.



**Queen Elizabeth II** became the charity's Royal Patron after acceding to the throne in 1952. She attended the RMBF's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations at St James' Palace, and in 2016, invited the RMBF to attend her Patrons Lunch on the Mall outside Buckingham Palace. We are so grateful to have enjoyed Her Majesty's patronage for more than 65 years.

## A host of Guild events for spring

It has been a busy start to the year for the RMBF's Guilds, and it was a particular pleasure for the team at the Wimbledon office to be invited along to several local events around the country. Charlotte, Sarah and Joe would like to say a big thank you for the warm welcomes and the chance to get to know our Guild supporters more closely.

### Warwickshire South

Roger Davies, Chair of the Warwickshire South Guild, hosted a thought-provoking talk in March on whistleblowing in the medical profession, delivered by two retired doctors who helped to expose the now convicted surgeon Ian Paterson. The talk was well-attended and sparked a passionate and frank discussion among the audience.

### Derby

March also saw a meeting of the Derby Medical Society, which included a fundraising collection for the RMBF

organised by the Derby Guild. More than £200 was raised on the day, and our grateful thanks to Mary Scott and everyone who organised, attended and donated.

### Brentwood

The Brentwood Guild's Annual Review meeting in March was a chance to look back over the year's activities while catching up with friends and colleagues over a delicious lunch at Mason's restaurant. The Guild have had a very successful year, raising over £4,000 in

support of medics in need, an increase on the previous year. Our congratulations and thanks to everyone who contributed to this fantastic work.

### Belfast

The Belfast Guild held their Annual Dinner in April, with 130 people in attendance enjoying a fun raffle, and an engaging speech by GP Magazine columnist Dr Liam Farrell on the highs and lows of his career in primary care. We're happy to say the evening raised over £4,500 for the RMBF, which is a fantastic achievement.



Left: all together at the Belfast Annual Dinner. Right: Lesley Donaldson, who founded the Belfast Guild 33 years ago, in attendance with her husband Richard



# Donation form

## Your details

Title  Forename(s)   
Surname   
Home address   
  
  
Postcode   
Email   
Phone

## Contacting you

**We will only contact you via the methods of communication you're happy with.**

**If you've already let us know your contact preferences, you can leave this blank - or check the relevant boxes to update your preferences.**

Please confirm if you are happy for us to contact you via the following channels with information about our news, activities and how you can donate and support our work (including volunteering or fundraising on our behalf).

Your details will only be used by the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund – we will **never** give your information to other organisations to use for marketing purposes.

For full details see [www.rmbf.org/privacy-policy](http://www.rmbf.org/privacy-policy)

**I'm happy to be contacted by:**

- ☐ **Email**  
☐ **Text**  
☐ **Phone**  
☐ **Post**  
☐ **None** (unsubscribe from RMBF communications)

## I would like to make a one-off donation

☐ £25 ☐ £50  
☐ £100  £  Other  
☐ I enclose a **cheque/charity voucher** made payable to **RMBF**  
☐ I would like to make a donation by  
**MasterCard/Maestro/Visa/Visa Debit/Amex**  
Card no.   
Start date    Expiry date   
Issue no. (Maestro only)  Security code   
Signature  Date

## I would like to make a regular donation

Amount £  beginning on   
and ☐ monthly  
☐ quarterly  
☐ annually thereafter until further notice  
Bank name   
Bank address   
  
Account name   
Account number   
Sort code   
Signature  Date   
Payment to: RMBF, NatWest Bank, Regent Street, London, sort code: 56-00-27, account number 24465178. **This replaces any existing standing order**

*giftaid it*

**Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate**

Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year. Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer.

**In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box below:**

**I want to Gift Aid my donation and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past 4 years to the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund.** ☐

I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax in the current tax year than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

**Please notify the RMBF** if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address, or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Please return forms to **FREEPOST RMBF** (no stamp required)

or to **RMBF, 24 Kings Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 8QN** (stamp required)

You can also donate online at **[www.rmbf.org](http://www.rmbf.org)** or by phone on **020 8540 9194**

Charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales No 207275 and the Scottish Charity Regulator No SC046148  
Company limited by guarantee, registered in England No 00139113

**NLS19**