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The **RMBF** Newsletter

Fantastic response to our urgent Covid-19 appeal

Thanks to supporters like you we have been able to help doctors affected by the pandemic

In April, as the UK hit the peak of the coronavirus outbreak, we asked for your help to ensure we are fully prepared to support doctors in need during and after the crisis.

We had already heard from our supporters and volunteers who are frontline doctors about the harsh conditions, damage to morale, and disruption of normality involved in fighting the virus.

While many doctors would be too busy to even consider seeking help at the peak of the crisis, we know it is inevitable that they will face serious fallout in the months and years to come, with a real risk of sharp rises in depression, burnout and post-traumatic stress disorder across the medical profession.

We are truly heartened to say that the response from our supporters – both longstanding and new to the charity – has been amazing. The return from our postal and online appeals was hugely generous,



with many of you sending heartfelt messages of goodwill alongside your donations. We've also had an incredible host of keen and dedicated fundraisers approaching us, full of ideas to get people giving – you can meet them on pages 4 and 5 of this issue!

We really could not be more grateful. Your donations are already being put to good use supporting doctors who are facing hardship because of coronavirus, and we know there will be more to come.

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Once again, thank you – and please read on for all the latest on how we're helping medics in need, thanks to your continued support.

CEO update

Steve Crone | RMBF Chief Executive

It is hard to know where to begin after the strangeness of the past four months, but I would like to start with some words of thanks.

A huge thank you to our doctors who have been working extraordinarily hard in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The stories we have heard from the frontline have been grim and inspiring in equal measure. Working conditions have been intense and exhausting, with doctors facing unprecedented levels of pressure, disruption and stress. But medics have shown astonishing bravery and commitment, going above and beyond, day after day, to save lives and contain the spread of the virus. We also thank all the key workers, throughout the NHS and elsewhere, who have kept the nation going through these difficult times.

At the same time, it has been very gratifying to see the great outpouring of public support for the NHS. That of course includes the incredibly generous response from you, our supporters, to our urgent coronavirus appeal in April. Your donations are directly supporting doctors affected by the pandemic, and we know there will be a long and protracted fallout for doctors as a result of the Covid-19 crisis.

I have also been delighted to see our supporters find ways to undertake innovative and ingenious fundraising activities within the confines of the lockdown. Your kind support is invaluable, and we are very grateful.

Changing plans

Like all organisations across the UK, the impact of Covid-19 has forced us to change the ways we work. We have inevitably seen an increase in applications from doctors facing financial difficulty as a result of the pandemic and we have introduced new measures to ensure fast-track payments can be made

to beneficiaries in urgent need. Despite the challenges, we have continued to assess all applications in a timely manner and have put systems in place to allow for payments to be made promptly.

Our support for beneficiaries has continued without interruption and we remain ready to take new applications. So if you know someone who may need our help, please tell them to get in touch.

Similarly, the DocHealth service we run with the BMA continues to offer confidential psychotherapy for doctors in need – all sessions are currently being held remotely. Over 700 doctors have now self-referred to the service since its launch.

As you may have heard, our Volunteer Conference will now take place in 2021 – hopefully it will be all the more enjoyable for the wait! We will announce the date once things become a little clearer. One more thank you to all our volunteers for their invaluable support and great work for the charity.

Our AGM will be going ahead in September and at this stage we plan to hold the meeting remotely, via video conference. Please check our website for up-to-date information.

Forging ahead

Even in these unusual times, I am pleased to say that we've made very good progress in key projects to strengthen and expand the support we can offer to doctors, their families and medical students in hardship. You can read about two of these on the opposite page. Our partnership with the Association of Anaesthetists is off to an excellent and productive start, and our



new wellbeing resource by Rightsteps is just one of many online support resources we'll be providing for doctors and medical students.

We're also welcoming some new additions to our team. Anyone who has met our outgoing President Professor Dame Parveen Kumar will know that she is a true force of nature and a very hard act to follow – but I'm certain that Professor Sheila the Baroness Collins will do so more than capably! I am indebted to Parveen for all her wonderful support.

Opposite you can also meet four new Trustees and a new Treasurer joining us this summer, which of course means that some of the current board will shortly be stepping down. My sincerest thanks to Professor Pali Hungin, Treasurer; Miss Heather Mellows, Chair of the Grants & Awards Committee; and to Trustees Dr Ted Adams, Jonathan Hine, and Professor Pauline McAvoy. It has been a great pleasure working with you all.

Ready to help

Covid-19 has presented an unprecedented challenge and we know the impact on the medical profession will be felt for months and even years.

With your help, the RMBF will be there for doctors, their families and medical students whenever they need our support.

With all good wishes,

Steve

Welcome to our new President

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Professor Sheila the Baroness Hollins (pictured right) as President Elect of the RMBF.

Baroness Hollins is Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry of Intellectual Disability at St George's University of London and Honorary Professor of Spirituality, Theology and Health, University of Durham. She will take office at the next AGM, to be held virtually in September.

Sheila has worked as a consultant psychiatrist, teacher, researcher and policymaker in intellectual disability and health. As an Independent Member of the House of Lords, she speaks on mental health, disability issues and adverse childhood experiences.

RMBF's Chair Professor Michael Farthing said: "I met Sheila nearly 20 years ago when we were colleagues at St George's.

Her professional and personal skills and experience will contribute greatly to the work of the RMBF, and I really look forward to working with her again."

The charity is also very pleased to welcome a new Treasurer and new Trustees in 2020.

Treasurer: Professor Greg Rubin, Emeritus Professor of General Practice and Primary Care at Newcastle University and former Treasurer and Director of the Primary Care Research Network in the North East

Trustees:

Professor Derek Bell OBE, Professor of Acute Medicine at Imperial College London and a former President of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh

Mr Andrew Hall, recent past CEO of the Royal College of Radiologists

Dr Peter Szatmary, HPB Surgical Trainee at the University of Liverpool and union representative

Dr Susan West, retired GP and naval surgeon, and OSCE examiner at St Bartholomew's Medical School

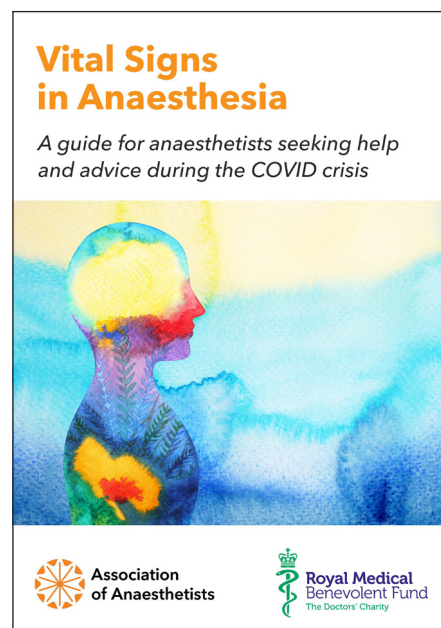


Wellbeing resources launched

The Vital Signs in Anaesthesia

Last year, the RMBF partnered with the Association of Anaesthetists to improve wellbeing in the specialty, amid growing evidence that anaesthetists may be particularly susceptible to high levels of work stress, burnout and depression. Our joint activities include recruiting volunteers to raise anaesthetists' awareness of what support is available, and stands at events offering resources and information from both organisations.

We have also launched a new edition of our popular series of guides, *The Vital Signs*, for anaesthetists. A collaboration between RMBF Trustee Dr Richard Stevens and a team of the Association's senior figures, it includes insight from a survey of working anaesthetists undertaken at the Annual Congress in Glasgow last year. Released in April, it is specifically tailored to provide a timely response to the current coronavirus crisis, but will be a living document and future updates are planned.



Download the guide here:

www.rmbf.org/vitalsigns

Online Support

Our new online wellbeing resource offers a range of helpful advice and information for doctors and medical students of all ages and specialties. Provided by Rightsteps, it covers a wide range of ways to look after your mental and physical health, including coping with the Covid-19 crisis.

The resource offers help in a structured way, with different types of session to suit your needs and the time you have available. "Find Out More" and "Bitesize" guides offer a starting point to help begin positive change, and these are open to all users. "Wellbeing Sessions" offer the opportunity for further change via structured, self-guided support.

We hope this will prove a helpful addition to the support we offer for doctors and medical students at this very difficult time and beyond.

www.rightsteps.co.uk/rmbf.html

Fundraisers unite for crisis-hit doctors

Since the very first weeks of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have been amazed by the number of keen, dedicated fundraisers who have got in touch, wanting to do whatever they could to support doctors fighting the virus on the frontline. Their impressive efforts have provided vital funds, and their creative, collaborative ideas will surely bring a smile to your face – read on to meet them.

Putting in the miles

Over 200 people came together remotely during lockdown in memory of their friend Ottie, who was training to be a doctor when she died. In a hugely positive and moving display of friendship, they aimed to run, walk and cycle 1,000 km between them over the course of ten days to raise funds for the RMBF.

Donations flooded in as they clocked up kilometres via socially-distanced exercise, smashing their distance target within two days. The final combined distance covered was an astonishing 13,572 km – the distance from the UK to Australia – with over £11,000 raised for the RMBF.

Shraddha (right, above), a student at Mearns Castle High School near Glasgow, ran laps around her home in May to cover a mammoth distance of 100 km. Over the course of eight days, at 300 laps per day, Shraddha raced past her fundraising total to make an amazing £1,600 for doctors in need.

Also taking on a long journey while staying safe at home is Melanie, currently studying for her A-levels and hoping to become a doctor. Alongside that, she is also making use of her trusty rowing machine to row the length of the Thames – that's 346 km. "All of a sudden, I'm schooling from home, my exams are cancelled, everyone is in lockdown and the people in the profession I want to follow are in the front line of a worldwide pandemic," she said. "Rather than just asking for money, I wanted to do something. To challenge myself for them."

Cooking & quizzing

Shraddha and Melanie both found out about the RMBF through Medic Mentor, who recently teamed up with the charity to create a hardship fund for doctors during the coronavirus pandemic.

Two more young fundraisers are also supporting Medic Mentor's fundraising push with fun ideas.

Noah, applying this year to study medicine at university, kept local spirits up in Cumbria by cooking and serving fish and chips for his neighbours, from his grandparents' catering van. His grandparents kindly donated the food, so the proceeds of Noah's culinary toil, over £230, all went to support doctors.

Quiz nights via Zoom have become a feature of lockdown for many of us. 16-year-old Ashwini, who also wants to become a doctor, set a quiz for friends



and family as far away as the US and India, to support frontline medics in need, raising more than £300!

Sound & vision

Oxford band The Ideas (below, left) recorded and released an original rock anthem, "Home (City of Dreaming Spires)" with all proceeds from the single's sales and streaming going towards the RMBF. The rousing single was played on BBC Radio Oxford and reached #11 in Amazon's new releases chart, and can be purchased at www.covidsucks.co.uk



London-based Katy Hands makes oil paintings (facing page, bottom right) in her spare time. Katy's husband is a paediatrician and has treated patients affected by Covid-19, so the need to support doctors hits close to home. Her stunning range of original works in oil are on sale at www.katyhands.gallery with all purchases supporting the RMBF.

Stairway to the summit

When a planned expedition to summit Everest was cancelled, three climbers due to take the trip together improvised an alternative. By climbing up and down the stairs in their own homes, Lucy Aspden (right, below), Jenny Wordsworth and Rob Ferguson aimed to scale the equivalent height of the mountain, as a

fundraiser for doctors in need. Featuring in the Metro, the Telegraph and on Sky News, the challenge supported by drinks company Tenzing raised a fantastic £3,000.

Hair today...

Finally, 15-year-old Mason (right, above) wanted to support doctors during the crisis – after finding out about the RMBF via an internet search, he chose to shave his head in aid of the charity. Family and friends helped Mason raise £160 – a big thank you! Mason wasn't alone in going under the clippers, with Painswick Young Farmers also taking on the head shave challenge from home, raising over £400 and helping to keep spirits up in lockdown.



The year in figures: 2019-20

273 beneficiaries given financial support

41 were helped to return to work or remain in work

41 were given help towards education and training

62 medical students given individual money advice

103,000
visits to our online support

£697,313
total financial impact for beneficiaries

DocHealth

770 doctors have self-referred to the service

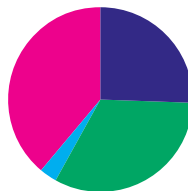
51% with significant depression

85% with significant anxiety

91% would recommend DocHealth to others

Finances

Year ended 31 March 2020



Income

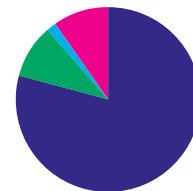
Donations £367,495

Legacies £465,114

Trading £44,144

Investment income £557,093

Total £1,433,846



Expenditure

Charitable activities £1,311,759

Generating future income £156,323

Trading £24,400

Other £160,333

Total £1,652,815

Q&A: South Warwickshire Guild

The RMBF's Guilds play an essential role for the charity, raising vital funds for doctors in need and fostering community among local medics. Recently we caught up with the South Warwickshire Guild over Zoom, speaking to Chair Dr Roger Davies (pictured, right) and Secretary Dr Lucia Birchall-Kander about the rewards and challenges of helping to run an RMBF Guild.

Q: How did you both first hear about the RMBF, and how did you first get involved in the Guild?

Lucia: Originally it was the wife of a Coventry neurosurgeon who got me to go to my first RMBF event in Warwickshire. I wasn't able to contribute much then because I was full-time, with a husband and two kids. Once I retired, I joined the South Warwickshire Guild as secretary seven or eight years ago.

Roger: One of the GP partners at my practice took me along to an RMBF evening do, about 39 years ago! It was held at an enormous GP or consultant's residence, as they used to have. He rightly took me along to get me to know local consultants and local GPs, which in those days was pretty important and stood me in good stead for my career.

Q: Why did you feel like the RMBF was an important charity to support?

L: I had a lot of support from various members of the former Coventry Guild, after my first husband died at only 32. Those were the people who made me aware of the RMBF. I never had to get help from the charity at that point, but was always grateful that it was there. I was only 34, with two young children, and I had to go back and work. So I was very, very glad of the support from lots of colleagues and also colleagues' wives. I've also been trying for a long time to ensure the younger doctors locally know about the RMBF, because there isn't much help from their colleagues now. In my career we were always being mentored and looked after. Whereas I get the feeling that it's now a very distant relationship.

Q: What events does the guild arrange, and can you give any tips?

R: In a normal year, we'd have a golf competition, a summer lunch in Lucia's garden, as well as a coffee and mince pies get-together before Christmas. And then I try to arrange a speaker dinner

in the autumn. They all aim at a slightly different audience, so we hope we can catch people at least once a year with an event that they like.

The most important thing is that the event grabs people's interest! An interesting speaker can be a huge help. We've had a neurosurgeon talking about working in Afghanistan, a doctor who climbed Everest, and the England cricket team's doctor.

And importantly, make sure there's nothing else on! Don't hold an event on Wimbledon finals day. We've previously done things on Father's Day or Mother's Day, and they were a disaster.

Q: What's the most rewarding aspect of helping run a Guild?

L: One thing is reading the accounts from people who have been very grateful for the RMBF's support, and have used it to really good advantage.

R: People who've tripped on the front doorstep, broke their leg, got to hospital and suddenly had a cancer scare. They're so often facing an absolute catalogue of issues, a mess, but these people are still helped to get back to work in the end.

L: I think that a lot of the public think – doctors, oh they're all right. But in fact they're the same as everybody else, just more pressurised than a lot of people.

Q: What are the challenges?

R: Basically, getting younger doctors involved. They're less interested, but they do get such an overload of material asking them to give money, attend this, do that. And they're busy: probably in a relationship where both partners work full-time, they go to the gym, etc.

It's hard finding home addresses with data protection laws. You can still send event invitations to practice addresses, but then it just becomes another piece of paperwork – doctors will tick that they've seen it, and nothing more. But we still maintain a mailing list of about 250 people.



And, at least we've found, finding those good speakers is crucial and not always easy. That might be an area where the Guilds and the RMBF staff and Trustees need to help each other out.

Q: What are your plans for the future?

R: The golf competition that should have been in May is now on Thursday 3 September, and then coffee and mince pies will be at our house on Saturday 28 November. We know it'll be tricky as our supporters are on the older side and will be more reluctant to go anywhere mixing with other people.

L: Sadly Covid-19's going to be around a long time. And that ties back to the importance of the charity: so many young doctors are shouting out for help, because they have been terribly bludgeoned by it, one way and another. I think there's going to be a lot of real psychiatric illness amongst a lot of them. So the RMBF is going to be much needed.

Dr Roger Davies retired a few years ago after 30 years in general practice in Kenilworth. He is a proud father and grandfather, and enjoys golf, badminton, running and tennis.

Dr Lucia Birchall-Kander retired from her last hospital post in 2007, after posts and training in radiotherapy and oncology, palliative care, and child health.

Our Guilds are always looking for new faces, and getting involved is a great way to support doctors in need while networking and having fun.

Get in touch with the team on info@rmbf.org to find out if there's a Guild near you – or how we can help you to start a Guild or Fundraising Group in your local area.

The difference your support makes

An RMBF beneficiary on how we helped with their rehabilitation and return to work

I'd been a doctor for 12 years, and prior to that I spent 7 years as a holiday hospital porter. I learnt during my time as a porter that you don't need to be different to be a doctor; you just need a natural and warm way with people. It was the delivery of healthcare that I loved.

At the end of March last year, I suffered a severe injury. I have no memory of it but it changed everything in my life at the same time. The bubble had burst.

Before, I would get up at 5am, run to the station and then run the 8 km the other end to work. The first time I cried after the trauma was over a month later when, with my father's support, I had slowly walked, with multiple stops, 1 km to the beach and sat looking out to the horizon. I realised that there were a huge number of things of enormous value to me that I may never do again.

After hospital discharge, my life was a full-time job of rehab. I learnt not to observe my rehab day-to-day or week-to-week. Fortnightly was the quickest I allowed myself to compare. Two steps forward and one step back is a phrase I learnt to live by. As time ticked along I improved. First it was walking in a straight line, and as the months passed, things continued to improve. The book was slowly turning from the chapter of being a patient to the chapter of being myself, and that included returning to work.

My sick pay was used straight away to start sorting out my finances as much as possible. I was £65,000 in debt when I qualified over a decade ago, and I realised I still wasn't in a neutral financial position. The RMBF gave me free access to a money adviser who taught me how to analyse incomings and outgoings in a helpful way.

The RMBF took away the looming financial impact of my situation. I couldn't work and earn money yet my mortgage, council tax, utility bills and food still needed paying. The RMBF helped cover



my essential outgoings. It meant I could live here and focus on my rehabilitation and my return to work. Without that I would have had to leave this region and move in with my parents on the other side of the country. Not the end of my career, but it would have created a huge hurdle that would have taken most of my attention away from rehab.

"My caseworker was able to take a huge weight off my shoulders a number of times."

During the long period of time I had off work, it felt like my main task was to stay focused on my rehabilitation and not to allow other things to be a distraction. That was so hard to achieve. My RMBF caseworker was invaluable. She provided support and was able to help remove any anxiety or distractions and keep me focused on rehab. An example would be having to travel on trains to medical appointments. The cost of those would

mount up and eat into my budget. She would pay money into my account for the travel.

Returning to work is one thing, but driving my car is another. During a time with no income the RMBF paid for prescription polarised sunglasses for me to use while driving. It may not sound like much, but I wouldn't drive without them. During my phased return, especially early on, my anxiety about fatigue and not being able to get safely home was high. My caseworker organised sending me money while I had no other income apart from employment support allowance, so I could afford a taxi home after work if needed. She was able to take a huge weight off my shoulders a number of times.

Without the support I've received from the RMBF I would be in a much worse place. Their help has meant that I've been able to stay on course. No one knows what's around the corner, but the RMBF are able to help people navigate in a way that I will be more than grateful for, for the rest of my life.

Beneficiary has chosen to remain anonymous

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

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**

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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** or by phone on **020 8540 9194**

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