

28 July 2022

Director of Learning Report 2020/2021

Overview

During 2020/2021 the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM) continued to deliver to the RSM vision of *better healthcare for better lives* - responding to the pandemic by making key contributions to the global body of healthcare knowledge and continuing to provide a programme of high quality multi-disciplinary health education delivered by expert and relevant professionals.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, this report demonstrates a high level of achievement in this period and recognises the enormous effort, and resilience, of the volunteers who are RSM members and leaders of the 55 Sections. It is without question, the specialist knowledge and networks of the Sections which underpin the unique offering and ethos of the RSM - a truly multi-disciplinary and multi-professional member experience. As we work to address new and emerging challenges, there is a real need for a health membership body which covers health care deep specialisms, but within a framework of key broad overarching themes such as 'health inequalities', and 'climate change' – and 'spotlighting' issues as they emerge. The RSM is positioned to do just that with world leading health specialists, a physical space and a global digital campus – underpinned by strong tradition with a forward facing mission.

This report will offer an overview, and highlights, of 2020/2021 through the lens of the pillars for which the Education Departments and the Library, which together make up the RSM Learning Directorate, are accountable.

Education Pillar: delivering multi-disciplinary specialist and general education as well as professional development.

In 2020/2021 the Section volunteer faculty, supported by RSM teams, continued to pivot to deliver 592 online events, with just 16 events being in person. The move to online has widened the RSM reach. With its key positioning as a leading authority on COVID-19 delivering the highly rated COVID-19 series, the RSM really leveraged its positioning in 2020/2021. The fact that RSM recordings had 1.3 million views during the year is noteworthy.

During the 2020/2021 period, feedback was sought and new digital delivery packages trialled. The focus on digital enhancement continues into 2022 with the RSM building its body of quantitative digital data and qualitative feedback. Responding to this feedback in the way the members and RSM teams are collaboratively planning the future programme of delivery – across the UK and internationally.

In reviewing the 608 events delivered in 2020/21, some particular highlights are set out below:

The RSM's COVID-19 webinar series delivered 48 COVID-19 Series episodes with more than 82,000 delegate registrations globally and over 191,000 YouTube views. The series featured expert guests including: Professor Chris Whitty (Chief Medical Officer, England), Sir Jeremy Farrar (Director of the Wellcome Trust), Professor Sharon Peacock (Executive Director of the COVID-19 Genomics UK), and Dr Chikwe Ihekweazu (Assistant Director General at the World Health Organization). During 2020/2021

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there was regular national press coverage in publications including The Times, The Telegraph, the Independent, The Daily Mail and HSJ.

The COVID-19 series continues into 2021/22, and has celebrated the 100th episode recently – continuing to build on the global interest and engagement it has generated.

Despite the continuing, necessary focus on COVID-19 throughout 2020/2021, the RSM also focused on other key priorities, including the a 10-part Health Emergency of Climate Change webinar series, funded by a donation of £100,000. The impact of climate change on human health again drew global interest, with 6,652 registrations and 6,303 views across the series.

The RSM is known for the interdisciplinary nature of its membership and the learning it offers. At the heart of the organisation are the 55 member Sections with their respective disciplinary focus. It is important to acknowledge that this high quality provision is delivery by our volunteer members who are our Academic Faculty. This is unique in the way it combines a cutting edge practitioner focus with expert led programme development with national and international expertise. Below are highlight just a couple examples of this excellent work.

In May 2021 the Psychiatry Section held a three-part series ‘Transforming mental health in schools and colleges’ in partnership with the charity MIND. The series, which discussed concepts and ideas around mental health that could be adapted for use in the classroom, had more than 1,500 delegate registrations across the three episodes and received positive feedback on a key, growing issue.

In September 2021, the Vascular, Lipid and Metabolic Medicine Section ran a four-day virtual conference about peripheral vascular disease, in association with the European Society of Vascular Medicine. The programme featured experts from countries including Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA, and attracted over 400 delegates from around the world.

Learning Resources Pillar: providing excellent healthcare resources.

During 2020/21 the RSM continued the digital library offering of healthcare resources with in person wherever the rules allowed. With a focus on enhancement, underpinned by understanding how members engage with RSM healthcare resources, in the winter of 2020/21 The RSM’s legacy authentication system was migrated to the more robust OpenAthens system.

The OpenAthens system provides members with faster, seamless access to resources in the digital library and delivers a more robust, secure and long-lasting technical infrastructure. And importantly, from a membership experience enhancement perspective, it has improved reporting on members' use of the digital library, allowing a greater degree of analysis than was previously possible and enabling better purchase decisions and more effective promotion of digital resources to our members.

In the summer of 2021 a Critical Appraisal and Research Methods training course was re-introduced attracting 108 delegates initially. In parallel the publisher Karger hosted a series of three free webinars for RSM members in March, May and July 2021 focusing on research skills and writing for publication. These were attended by more than 230 members.

Both research focussed offerings substantially increased the reach and impact of information skills training offered by the library during their period of operation. However, learning from our data analysis,

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and mindful of the need to ensure resources are used in a focused way efficiently, we renegotiated the Karger contract in 2022, with a tighter specification of what our members need – releasing resources for further enhancement and innovation of our portfolio of educational resources.

In summary 2020/2021 was another pivotal year for the RSM Education Programmes and Resources. The RSM has risen to the challenge presented by COVID-19 by supporting the world of health with resources dedicated to driving a pandemic response, but also by ensuring members could continue their RSM experience in new and exciting ways, offering much needed connection in an often isolated context. The Learning Directorate also ensured that other dimensions of the vision continued to be addressed – through the climate change offering, the specialist medical offering and the focus on professional development.

The work undertaken in 2020/2021 provides a key underpinning for our current and future work. As expectations of learning develop, patterns of attendance change and the world around us changes, we are responding by innovating the way we organise and deliver – embracing new platforms and trialling mixed reality approaches. The future, whilst challenging, offers real opportunity to the RSM as a platform for innovation and collaboration, working together to ensure we respond to the changing needs of *better healthcare for better lives*.

Finally, I wholeheartedly thank all the volunteer members, key speakers and supporters, and colleagues at the RSM for collaborating to successfully to deliver to the RSM mission to *share learning and support innovation* throughout 2020/21.

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