

Supporting tomorrow's doctors

The United Kingdom Medical Students' Association (UKMSA) (www.ukmsa.org) is a student–doctor collaboration that aims to unite over 40 000 medical students across the UK regardless of geography. It is hosting its inaugural international medical student conference on 11 May and is proud to announce Rt Hon Andrew Lansley, the UK Secretary of State for Health, as the keynote speaker.

Background to UKMSA

UKMSA was founded in June 2010 with the aims of providing free resources to medical students nationwide, including careers and examination advice, information on research and prize opportunities, as well as future plans for podcasts and an online forum.

There are currently a vast number of student medical and surgical societies in existence throughout the UK and the opportunity to create and facilitate links between them will have significant benefits for all concerned.

Uniting with clinicians

Lord Walton of Detchant, the Honorary Chairman of UKMSA, guides the student team with advice provided by the executive trustees which include such influential clinicians and surgeons as Professor Sir Graeme Catto, Professor Michael Baum, Dame Fiona Caldicott, Professor Robin Williamson and Professor Shervanthi Homer-Vanniasinkam. With the wealth of experience provided by these figures, the student team hopes to expand the UKMSA into the premier go-to website and umbrella organization for UK medical students seeking information and support.

2011 UKMSA conference in Bournemouth

The International Surgical Congress of the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland, an event that already plays host to over 1500 surgeons from all over the globe, is associated with the 2011 UKMSA conference. Under the wing of this congress, the 2011 UKMSA event will be one of the largest and most prestigious

single-day medical student conferences in Europe, bringing together over 470 medical students to network and showcase their own work.

A major aim of the conference is to make scientific presentations more accessible to students. The medical training system has undergone much flux in recent years and, while application forms for foundation training continue to change, one thing is clear. The system is moving in favour of students and doctors deciding on their specialty earlier. Students are responding by attempting to get more involved in scientific research, clinical research, audits, case reports and reviews. The skills gained are highly useful in future career progression and often the work can give students a greater insight into a specialty than clinical exposure alone. However, many find it difficult to present their work in major conferences and a student conference can act as a less intimidating environment in which to gain practice and constructive criticism from peers.

Research collaboration

The UKMSA Research Collaboration (accessible via the UKMSA website) is a further attempt to bridge the gap between students and clinicians and will be launched at the conference. This database is a resource to help students with an interest in research to take part in a project with a leading researcher or clinician during their time in medical school. These projects are designed specifically for students by doctors who are very keen to increase student participation in their work. It aims to help students get involved in clinical research, audit and publication in the specialty of their choice. This

nationwide network of research contacts and interested medical students enables free exchange of ideas and allows medical students to contribute meaningfully to an ongoing piece of work.

The future

The *British Journal of Hospital Medicine* shares our vision and has kindly agreed to publish eight of the best abstracts from the conference in this issue (p. M77). We hope that the conference comes to be one of the major calendar events for medical students both throughout the UK and abroad.

The maxim of the UKMSA is to 'support tomorrow's doctors' by inspiring them, providing them with the resources and opportunities they need to make the most of their careers and connecting them to clinicians nationwide, as well as rewarding exceptional student research projects. **BJHM**

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KEY POINTS

- The United Kingdom Medical Students' Association (UKMSA) is a student–doctor collaboration that aims to unite over 40 000 medical students across the UK.
- The UKMSA works in conjunction with an Executive Trustee Board of eminent UK clinicians.
- The UKMSA is hosting an international student conference with over 300 medical students in attendance.
- The conference will also see the launch of a novel research collaboration network that aims to increase the accessibility of audits and research to students.