

The one that got away

Profile: Dr Andrew Elder, Demitting Chair, Part 2 Clinical Examining Board

Dr Andrew Elder recently completed his five-year term as Chair of the MRCP(UK) Clinical Examining Board, stepping down from the post in August 2013.

Dr Elder first became a clinical examiner in the mid-1990s. While he was Registrar of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE), he helped develop the highly successful Clinical Skills Assessment Centre at the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh, where he is a consultant in acute medicine for older people. His early involvement in MRCP(UK) also extended to the written examinations with roles in the Specialty Question Groups, Part 2 Written Board and Specialty Certificate Examination Standard Setting Groups.

After four years as a member of the Clinical Examining Board, he was appointed Chair in 2008. During his tenure, the examination has undergone many significant developments, including the:

- introduction of an uncompensated pass standard, ensuring candidate competence across all core clinical skills
- redevelopment of Station 5, integrating the assessment of communication with physical examination and setting the assessment of these core skills in more realistic clinical contexts
- establishment of examiner accreditation criteria and performance measures.

Dr Elder has been a highly effective ambassador for PACES in the UK and internationally. He has examined in all but one of our international centres, and has been closely involved in the commissioning and development of new centres in Khartoum, Al Ain, Kolkata and Chennai. In 2010, recognising the need for a forum where other Colleges and Faculties in the UK could exchange ideas about postgraduate medical assessment, he co-founded the Sharing Good Practice group that he still chairs.

He is a passionate advocate for the rigorous assessment of bedside clinical skills and in early 2013, he was invited to Stanford Medical School in California, where he worked as an Associate Professor and shared his expertise in the teaching and assessment of bedside skills. His first paper arising from his experience was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association in August.

Having distinguished himself by talking to a previous Medical Director of MRCP(UK) about PACES for the entire duration of a long-haul flight to Hong Kong, Dr Elder can occasionally be deflected into conversation about his other passion – fly fishing. So if you find yourself sitting next to him on a plane, and you don't want to talk about PACES, you know where to cast a line!

“He has done a superb job and commands huge respect,” says Dr Kenneth Dagg, who has taken the baton (if not the fishing rod) and now chairs the Part 2 Clinical Examining Board. “That’s because he’s a listener, and thoughtful, good at managing challenges and setting strategy.”

Professor Jane Dacre, MRCP(UK) Medical Director, said, "We are very sorry to lose Dr Andy Elder from the Clinical Examination Board. During his tenure, the examination has been thoroughly reviewed, and has become recognised as an example of excellence in the assessment of clinical competence." She added, "We are grateful to him for sharing his intellect and enthusiasm for PACES with us over his term, and will ensure that he keeps in touch in the future."