

# Conference report: The PCRMM Society Annual Conference 2020

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## ‘First Contact Practitioners and the Evolving MSK Workforce’

The Society’s annual conference was held on the 12-13<sup>th</sup> November 2020. This year, due to the pandemic, the decision was taken to hold the conference online. This was a first for the society. As a result, the conference team had to learn a new set of skills in order to develop and deliver an event which was effective for the delegates and could meet their expectations.

Formal feedback and evaluation from delegates will be available in due course but informal responses to date via social media and email have been overwhelmingly positive.

*‘What a great example of how good an online conference can be. Congratulations @loobicia @pcrsociety Lucy Douglas and all the rest of the PCRMM team #PCRMM2020.’*

There were no significant technical difficulties. The practicalities and technical management of the event will be reviewed by the conference team to use the event as a learning experience to capture knowledge and strengthen the society’s approach going forward. People were understanding of the minor glitches which occurred.

The conference theme was ‘First Contact Practitioners and the Evolving MSK Workforce.’ The theme was chosen in recognition of the major changes which are taking place in the primary care workforce and the need to provide learning resources and peer discussion to support the many people who are working as or planning to become First Contact Practitioners.

The PCRMM is the oldest primary care society in the UK and hence naturally has a focus both on the primary care workforce and the importance of providing learning opportunities which strengthen individual practice.

The conference programme took in topics where it was felt that there could be knowledge gaps or a benefit in strengthening previous learning. Getting back to first principles as starting point to develop individual practice was seen as a robust approach. What are you looking at? What is normal? What could the symptoms indicate? What is the wider context for that individual patient? What are the next steps? What tests could I or should I initiate? Will you understand the results? When should you act immediately? How do these things look from the perspective of people taking the referral?

Drawing together a line-up of speakers exploring rheumatological issues from different disciplines and perspectives provided the opportunity for delegates to ‘join the dots’ i.e. the insights and experience of one speaker were given added value for delegates by the thoughts and practice of the next and in some cases the interrelationship of their specialities.

There were advantages to being online.

It was accessible for people who were unlikely to have been able to attend in person through geography, time or cost.

There were many first-time attendees.

*'New to the society and thought the conference was great. Online was absolutely brilliant and so accessible. Thanks.'*

Recording the talks and making them available online means that detailed content can be revisited and studied at leisure adding to the value of the resources produced.

In some cases, speakers could address their conference from their clinic meaning that contributing to the event was efficient in terms of their time.

The chat and question functions of the platform format meant that it was likely that people could readily contribute, and questions could be captured efficiently. Some speakers have continued to answer questions after the event.

## The speakers

Overall, the speakers provided practical insights and generated discussion. Question and Answer sessions were generally lively.

Mr Birender Balain, spinal surgeon at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, Oswestry offered a practical advice around the key factors to when considering a referral for spinal surgery.

Dr Phil O'Connor, consultant radiologist and Associate Professor of Radiology, Leeds Teaching Hospitals provided a comprehensive overview of the issues to consider when requesting radiological investigations. He stressed the importance of not only understanding when to request them but also the need to be able to interpret the results efficiently to ensure that the best pathway for treatment was selected.

Amanda Hensman-Crook provided a much valued update on the First Contact Practitioner and Advanced Practitioners in primary care: (Musculoskeletal) Roadmap to Practice including the routes to becoming a supervisor going forward. This presentation naturally generated many questions and much debate showing the significance and interest in the way forward.

Dr Lucy Douglas provided a valuable and practical overview and advice regarding identifying inflammatory arthritis in Primary Care including when not to wait for the outcome of blood tests.

Dr Louise Warburton provided an overview of blood tests based on the conference approach to returning to first principles to build back up from the basic to assist in day to day practice under the FCP strand.

*'Great @pcrsociety conference with @GilesHazan talking pain and @loobicia clarifying blood results. A really useful event! Thanks!'*

Dr Giles Hazan GPwSI MSK Medicine, Sussex MSK Partnership an engaging session with Giles speaking about Pain Management and Fibromyalgia talking through person-centred approaches and the importance of good communication when working with patients.

Dr Zoe Paskins, Honorary Consultant Rheumatologist at the Haywood Rheumatology Centre and Clinical lead for the Osteoporosis Service for North Staffordshire spoke to the conference from her clinic on Osteoporosis and the FRAX algorithm providing a very straightforward discussion around fall fracture risk assessment in Primary Care and how to use FRAX and adapt it for different clinical scenarios. An engaging and informative talk listening to why fractures can be missed.

Dr Ed Roddy, Reader in Rheumatology and Honorary Consultant Rheumatologist, School of Primary, Community and Social care, University of Keele provided an overview of gout management in primary care.

*'Fantastic opening talk at the @pcrsociety conference by Dr Ed Roddy on #Gout #CrystalArthropathy'*

Dr Ollie Hart discussed approaches to chronic pain and benefits of exercise and keeping active and the real-world examples of the results. The impacts of these approaches to individual care and wellbeing regimes will increase in importance in the future. A thoughtful presentation which resonated with delegates.

Heidi Siddle Consultant Podiatrist NIHR Senior Clinical Lecturer, Associate Professor, Leeds Institute of Rheumatic and Musculoskeletal Medicine, University of Leeds gave a comprehensive outline of how to differentiate between mechanical and inflammatory disease in the feet with practical guidance on advising patients about footwear.

*'Great #pcrmm2020 meeting, really useful information and great speakers throughout. Thanks @pcrsociety!'*

Diarmuid Ferguson Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner and Chris Mercer, Consultant Physiotherapist explored the warning signs for Cauda Equina Syndrome in Primary Care. They discussed the National Back Pain Pathway and invited clinicians to provide feedback on a 'work in progress.' Cauda Equina is a devastating condition; 'a condition that although not very common is well worth spending time on and getting right.' This session generated a lot of food for thought and ongoing discussion. It emphasised the importance of developing local pathways to ensure that patients suspected of the syndrome get the investigations and treatment they need.

Dr Danny Murphy works as a GP in Honiton and a Staff Grade Rheumatologist in Exeter provided a session on Spondylarthritis which was much appreciated answering questions were pressing for a number of delegates.

*'#PCRMM2020 has been brilliant; a credit to the @pcrsociety members behind the scenes who have worked hard to develop it. It's worth those in #PrimaryCare taking a look at their website.'*

Sarah Mackie, Associate Professor in Rheumatology, Chapel Allerton hospital, Leeds added an important element to the conference with Rheumatology update: including an overview of new drugs and latest developments including COVID. This talk illustrated the great desire for clear guidance including the use steroids during the pandemic.

On Thursday afternoon the conference heard from Dr Chris Monella, GPwSI Musculoskeletal Medicine, Surry and David Walsh, Professor of Rheumatology, University of Nottingham about 'Current Practice and future thinking on the multidisciplinary management of osteoarthritis pain.

*'Quite honestly one of the most useful and interesting conferences I have ever been on. As a new PCRMM member I would definitely encourage others to join and or attend next year's conference!'*

The conference was sponsored by Pfizer, Amgen and Medac Pharma. We are very grateful for their support.