

## Joint Working Group between the Association of Cancer Physicians and The Royal College of Radiologists

Annual report 2023/24

### About the Joint Working Group

In autumn 2023, the Association of Cancer Physicians (ACP) and the Faculty of Clinical Oncology at The Royal College of Radiologists (RCR) formed a Joint Working Group (JWG).

It was established in response to a recommendation in the [Report and Recommendations of the Clinical Oncology and Medical Oncology Closer Working Group](#).

The JWG is an executive body that aims to support and enable Clinical Oncology and Medical Oncology to discuss and deliver on key strategic and operational issues that are important to both specialities, and to speak with a single national (UK) voice to support service and specialty development, in the best interests of patient care.

Membership of the JWG comprises:

RCR (Clinical Oncology (CO))	ACP (Medical Oncology (MO))
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vice-President, CO</li> <li>Medical Director, Education and Training, CO</li> <li>Medical Director, Professional Practice, CO</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chair, Executive Committee</li> <li>Deputy Chair, Executive Committee</li> <li>Honorary Secretary, Executive Committee</li> <li>Chair, Specialty Advisory Committee for MO, Joint Royal Colleges of Physicians Training Board</li> </ul>

This small team - comprising the leaderships of both organisations - enables agile working, speedy decision-making and effective routes for consulting with the wider MO and CO memberships.

### First year of the Joint Working Group: 2023/24

The JWG met three times in its first year – in November 2023, and in March and July 2024. It explored five areas for potential joint working between CO and MO:

#### *a) Workforce development*

Workforce shortages are a major concern for both specialities. These were highlighted in the Health and Social Care Committee's March 2022 report [Expert Panel: evaluation of the Government's commitments in the area of cancer services in England](#) and in the results from the RCR's [2023 CO Workforce Census](#). Recruitment and retention have therefore been priority issues for the JWG.

The Group expressed a strong wish for joint working on some recruitment activities. At the start of 2024, the RCR hosted a 'blue skies thinking' meeting around recruitment to oncology and invited medical oncologists to take part. This positive and successful event generated an open and wide-ranging discussion about barriers to recruitment, and ideas for how to increase applications to the specialities. Every suggestion was considered, no matter how large or small.

Both specialities hosted recruitment webinars during the year – and both achieved an increase in the fill rate for training posts. The ACP and the RCR intend to host joint recruitment events for oncology in the future, to reach a wider audience and offer attendees information about both specialities.

The RCR applied to NHS England, on behalf of both CO and MO, for funding for an oncology recruitment campaign. If successful, this could enhance our potential for future oncology recruitment activities. Alongside this, the RCR is in discussions with the UK Foundation Programme about taking more Foundation Year (FY) trainees into CO and has agreed to explore the scope for extending this to

oncology with a focus on FY2s. Looking beyond the UK, the RCR has been liaising with NHS Professionals on a future Global Oncologists Programme.

Alongside specialty recruitment, keeping and supporting the existing workforce is key and the ACP and RCR have shared plans for outreach activities to support oncologists in their day-to-day practice.

#### *b) Policy*

With workforce the major concern, it is important that the specialties highlight the pressures placed on services by the current shortages. This was the focus of [The SACT workforce crisis in Scotland - a medical perspective](#), a joint RCR and ACP policy briefing published in November 2023.

The JWG has further recognised the difficulties faced by many smaller centres in maintaining adequate cancer services for their patients and is considering what it can do to help address this issue – be this through principles/recommendations for good service provision, discussion meetings to explore changing ways of working or some other route.

#### *c) Training*

Training for MO and CO is a further area that the JWG has considered this year, noting the potential inclusion in the CO Curriculum of 'sustainability' issues (to promote a 'green' approach to service provision) and ongoing concerns raised by many consultants about the lack of time for training in the face of increasing service demands. The curricula for CO and MO are subject to a rolling four-year review by the General Medical Council.

The RCR and the ACP continue to work closely on training issues through reciprocal representation on the CO Specialty Training Board and the Specialty Advisory Committee for MO.

#### *d) Professional Guidance*

The JWG welcomed the publication by the Royal College of Physicians in November 2023 of its [Acute Care Toolkit 7: Acute Oncology \(AO\) on the acute medical unit](#). In addition, the UK AO Society is developing a sample job plan for AO, with a view to this being published by the RCR - and jointly badged by the ACP - as a supplement to its [job planning guidance](#).

In other work, the RCR is planning new guidance on the management of bone health in men with prostate cancer and has welcomed input from MO on the guidance Working Group.

#### *e) Education*

The JWG recognises the importance of ongoing educational and learning opportunities for trainee and consultant oncologists, and has welcomed events and resources aimed at both specialties. The RCR is currently undertaking a review of its e-learning resources, some of which are open to medical oncologists to use.

### **Looking ahead - a Joint Faculty for CO and MO, hosted in the RCR**

The *Report and Recommendations of the Clinical Oncology and Medical Oncology Closer Working Group* outlined the work undertaken by the ACP, RCP and the RCR to explore the benefits - to patients, the NHS and to clinicians – of closer working between CO and MO.

After wide-ranging analysis and consultations, they concluded that the best eventual solution would be for the two specialties (remaining separate) to form a Joint Faculty, hosted within the RCR. A detailed investigation of a range of financial, operational and governance issues suggested that this could not be implemented at that time.

Establishing the JWG has therefore been an important first step in continuing the discussions on closer working in key areas, as outlined above. The JWG remains committed to working towards a Joint Faculty when it becomes possible. In the meantime, we hope clinical and medical oncologists will welcome and support the early progress made by the JWG.

**Dr Tom Roques**  
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The Royal College of Radiologists

**Prof Andrew Wardley**  
Chair, Executive Committee  
Association of Cancer Physicians