From the editor

Founded in 1518, the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) published its first journal *The Transactions of the Royal College of Physicians* in 1772 but this venture only lasted a few years. The college publication was revived as the *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of London* in 1966, which was renamed *Clinical Medicine* in 2001 in an inspired move by the then editor Dr Peter Watkins.

On appointment, enquiries about my term of office as editor were deflected by indicating that it was my intention to exceed that of the journal's founding editor, Dr Stuart Mason, who served for a remarkable 21 years. Bowing out after nearly six years has proved more realistic and tempered by the pleasure and privilege of working within the RCP and the happy discovery that so many people have been not only willing, but pleased to contribute to the journal. The range and expertise that these contributions represent has been immense and embrace many of the best features of clinical medicine in its widest sense.

In times gone by, an RCP appointment was a tap on the shoulder or a phone call of invitation. How things have changed for the better. For my successor, a formal advertisement invited applications from individuals with relevant experience. The shortlisted candidates were then interviewed by a senior group of college officers, chaired by the president. Each candidate made a formal presentation of their plans, and after discussion an appointment was recommended. From an outstanding field of applicants, I am delighted to welcome the incoming editor of the RCP journal, Professor Humphrey Hodgson as the sixth journal editor.

After Oxford and St Thomas' Hospital, Humphrey trained in gastroenterology at St Thomas', the Royal Free Hospital and Harvard Medical School and the Massachusetts General Hospital. He was appointed lecturer and then in succession senior lecturer and professor of gastroenterology at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School and Hammersmith Hospital. His initial research interests lay in the pathogenesis of inflammatory bowel disease, and in particular its immunological aspects. This immunological interest led him over time into the field of hepatology, culminating in his appointment to the Sheila Sherlock Chair of Hepatology at the Royal Free Hospital and University College Medical School in 1999. Throughout Humphrey's career he has been an academic in the best sense of that word with a sustained productive research output, but he has also maintained a wide interest in all aspects of clinical medicine and the careers of others who have followed paths quite different from his own. He is an excellent clinician exemplified by his colleagues and their families regularly seeking his advice when they themselves have encountered medical problems. He also has particular expertise and interest in teaching and medical education.

Humphrey has served the RCP in a wide variety of roles over many years as an examiner, chairman of the gastroenterology and hepatology committee, council member, a member of the journal editorial board and more recently, as senior censor and vice president for education and training. His thoughtful, constructive, positive and lucid contributions to discussion in all the RCP forums have been invaluable.

And so, the present editor bows out, opening the way for the continued evolution of the journal in a new direction with fresh ideas and authors; changes which will ensure that the journal continues to engage the interests of members and fellows. I know that the incoming editor will continue to benefit from the generous and constructive support that I have received from the publications team, which is a feature of central importance for the continued success of the journal.

Robert Allan