

# Neurology in motion

Geraint Fuller, Phil Smith and Martin Rossor

Prof Langton Hewer highlights the limited and inequitable provision of services to patients with neurological disease across the UK. In doing so he echoes the arguments presented in the joint report from the Association of British Neurologists (ABN) and the Royal College of Physicians published in 2011, *Local adult neurology services for the next decade*.<sup>1</sup>

The number of neurologists in the UK has increased dramatically over the last two decades – from 230 in 1994 to 694 in 2011.<sup>2</sup> In parallel, the number of physicians has also increased – from 3,000 in 1994 to 12,000 in 2011.<sup>3</sup> This increase in numbers has improved access to neurology services, in particular shortening outpatient waiting times and acute stroke services. However, the UK still has fewer than one-quarter of the number of neurologists per capita than the United States and most of Europe.<sup>4</sup>

Documents over the decades have repeatedly called for improved access to neurology services<sup>1,4,5</sup> and, most recently, there have been specific calls for patients with neurological disorders admitted to district general hospitals to have improved access to neurologists.<sup>1</sup>

The changes occurring in the NHS as a result of the most recent reforms present both risks and opportunities for all specialties. The ABN is working closely with the Neurological Alliance, a charity that acts as the coordinator for many disease-specific neurological charities, to try to enhance services for neurological patients. As Prof Langton Hewer points out, the recent appointment of David Bateman as the first national clinical director for neurology, and the introduction of the new strategic clinical networks that include neurology, provide opportunities for further development.

There have been significant advances in the diagnosis and treatment of neurological disorders and the challenge is to deliver the benefits to these patients efficiently and effectively in all parts of the country. There has been substantial improvement, but there is still much to do.

## References

- 1 Royal College of Physicians, Association of British Neurologists. *Local adult neurology services for the next decade*. Report of a working party. London: RCP, 2011. [www.rcplondon.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local-adult-neurology-services.pdf](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/local-adult-neurology-services.pdf) [Accessed 2 August 2013].
- 2 Royal Colleges of Physicians. *Consensus of consultant physicians in the UK 2011. Specialty report: Neurology*. London: RCP, 2013. [www.rcplondon.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2011\\_census\\_-\\_neurology\\_report.pdf](http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2011_census_-_neurology_report.pdf) [Accessed 2 August 2013].
- 3 Federation of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the UK. *Census of consultant physicians and medical registrars in the UK, 2011: data and commentary*. London: Royal College of Physicians, 2013.
- 4 Association of British Neurologists. *Acute neurological emergencies in adults*. London: ABN, 2002. [www.theabn.org/abn/userfiles/file/AcuteNeurologicalEmergenciesinAdults.pdf](http://www.theabn.org/abn/userfiles/file/AcuteNeurologicalEmergenciesinAdults.pdf) [Accessed 2 August 2013].
- 5 Association of British Neurologists. *UK neurology – the next ten years. Putting the patient first*. London: ABN, 2003. [www.theabn.org/abn/userfiles/file/Next\\_10\\_years\\_final.pdf](http://www.theabn.org/abn/userfiles/file/Next_10_years_final.pdf) [Accessed 2 August 2013].

**Address for correspondence:** Dr G Fuller, Association of British Neurologists, Ormond House, 27 Boswell Street, London WC1N 3JZ.  
**Email:** [Geraint.Fuller@glos.nhs.uk](mailto:Geraint.Fuller@glos.nhs.uk)

Geraint Fuller, president; Phil Smith, president elect; Martin Rossor, immediate past president

Association of British Neurologists, London, UK