

## news reviews

abortion, presumed consent, workforce issues

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## RCOG calls for decriminalisation of abortion

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) joined the BMA and RCM in calling for abortion to be decriminalised. In 2016 there were 200,000 abortions in the UK. Since the passing of the Abortion Act in 1967 there have been 8.5 million abortions. To conceptualise such a number consider for a moment that the total population of London is 8.7 million people. Currently, two doctors are required to see any woman seeking an abortion. Both are legally required to verify that the abortion is justified within the terms of the 1967 Act, before the abortion is considered legal. Decriminalisation would mean abortion has the same legal status as any other medical procedure and would therefore only require one doctor to obtain consent for the procedure to go ahead. November 2017 marked 50 years since the 1967 Abortion Act was passed.

Lesley Regan, President of the RCOG, has also joined with calls to allow drugs for medical abortions to be administered at home, rather than on registered premises as currently required. More than 60% of abortions in the UK were carried out using drugs rather than surgery in 2016. Further details can be found on the CMF Blog at [bit.ly/2CdplnT](http://bit.ly/2CdplnT).

[rcog.org.uk](http://rcog.org.uk) 22 September 2017, [cmfblog.org.uk](http://cmfblog.org.uk) 15 December 2017

## PM backs 'presumed consent'

UK Prime Minister Theresa May pledged to introduce a system of presumed consent for organ donation in England during her speech to the 2017 Conservative Party Conference. The proposal is currently subject to public consultation – the documents can be found on the Government Consultation website at [bit.ly/2jRn8S8](http://bit.ly/2jRn8S8).

May's predecessor but one, Gordon Brown, had proposed a similar idea in 2008, but no changes

were made after the Organ Donation Taskforce at the time concluded that such a change was unlikely to increase donation rates.

Reaction has been mixed, with the BMA (which has long backed a form of presumed consent) welcoming the announcement, but a *Daily Telegraph* article stating: 'Theresa May's organ donation reform sends a chilling message: that the state owns your body unless you opt out'.

[bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) 4 October 2017, [telegraph.co.uk](http://telegraph.co.uk) 5 October 2017

## NHS workforce at 'crucial moment' according to GMC

Just as *Nucleus* goes to press, the General Medical Council (GMC) has released a report showing that the number of doctors on the medical register has grown only 2% since 2012. In the same period, Accident and Emergency attendances in England have increased by 27%. In some areas of the country, 40% of doctors are now non-UK graduates.

More than half of doctors take time out after Foundation Training, a significant increase on before, and not all return. The GMC's Charlie Massey said: 'The underlying challenge for all in healthcare is how we retain the good doctors we have right now. Everything we hear from the profession tells us that we need to value them more.' Massey stressed the need to help doctors 'achieve the right balance between their professional and personal lives through more flexible working arrangements'.

[bbc.co.uk](http://bbc.co.uk) 19 December 2017 ■