



# Royal College of Physicians

## Dr Patrick Byrne's biography

Patrick is both a GP and a Consultant Physician in Fort William, Scotland. This novel approach to staffing rural hospitals had not been done before, and was an innovation submitted to and endorsed by the Scottish Government. Together with his late wife, Sarah Prince, he has spoken at national and international conferences on many of the innovations of Belford Hospital – placing the patient at the centre of everything, and at the same time improving efficiency, outcomes and reducing costs. He is an Honorary Clinical Senior Lecturer at Aberdeen University, and has published 7 books for students and trainees.

Please view the full biography here: <http://www.belford-hospital-150.co.uk/wp/speakers/belford-150-keynote-speakers/>

## Presentation summary

Among the impediments to recruitment and retention in remote or rural settings are the onerous workload (especially out of hours), the lack income opportunities (e.g. private practice), the challenges in securing spousal employment, and the perceived professional and social isolation. Words that could have been written today, were in fact the themes that emerged from the 1850s census of Highland parishes conducted by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh. Themes which repeated in the 1912 Dewar report, which many regard as the forerunner to the founding of the NHS in 1948. The problem of staffing, therefore, is similar to the obesity crisis – we are unlikely to have a solution, but there will be numerous opportunities to make an impact, and we will have to keep innovating lest it overwhelm us.

There is, however, more than a glimmer of hope right now as the pendulum of training and service provision swings back from super specialisation and to expert generalism. Doctors and students, who spend more than a cursory visit to these locations are frequently amazed at the breath of general medicine and general surgery that can and does present. Trainees feedback year on year on their placements in these small units where they were given the greatest support to mature in their decision making, to take responsibility, and to both see the purpose in everything they do yet not be afraid to question or challenge convention if necessary. These fragile healthcare ecosystems are the bedrock on which truly expert generalism foundations can be laid. 99% of doctors do not need to stay, but will be better off having stopped by on their professional journey.