



Why sessional GPs should stand for their LMC

Ahead of this summer's elections, Dr Veni Suri explains how he got involved with his area's LMC and the value he has had from LMC membership. Veni joined Hillingdon LMC as a trainee rep and within a few years has become Vice-Chair.

"What is the LMC? What does it do?" I could remember asking these questions when asked at VTS whether anyone wanted to be the local trainee rep. The reply was, "In essence, the LMC is here to represent GPs and ensure we get a fair deal." I felt representation was an important issue and so joined the LMC as a trainee.

I was a little apprehensive at my first LMC meeting being around some GPs who had several decades more experience. I quickly realised my apprehension was misplaced as I was warmly welcomed to the LMC and the Chair made it clear that I could stop the meeting at any point if an explanation was needed. I recall learning new terminology such as primary care contracts, local enhanced services and commissioning, but any embarrassment by raising my hand and being curious was quickly quashed. Furthermore, the committee appreciated my interest in learning. Questions soon became representation, taking back to the LMC issues trainees were facing such as difficulty transitioning into salaried roles and the limits of trainee indemnity cover. This was useful to the trainees as the LMC provided support where possible. Having trainee reps provides a valuable bridge between the LMC and the VTS, as given the LMC is for all GPs including trainees, it engages the younger generation of GPs. Encouraging engagement from this cohort of GPs ensures relevance across a wide range of experiences and improves diversity of representation. Many trainees decide to continue their involvement after qualifying.

At the end of training I became a sessional GP and was asked whether I would like to stay on the LMC and I jumped at the opportunity. The LMC provide a lot of training for new committee members including courses on negotiating, media skills and presentation skills. This ensures you are not faced with a new role unequipped. A lot of these skills are transferable to all aspects of a GP's career.

Further into my career I took on the responsibility of a sessional rep. I gathered issues sessionals in our borough were facing and relayed them to the LMC. This was important as partners and other sessionals could feed into the discussion at committee meetings in order to find solutions to the issues I was raising. For example, sessionals in certain areas of work were not receiving adequate access to PPE and the LMC raised awareness that this was unacceptable. Furthermore, three years ago when there was an uplift to the global sum to account for the rise in indemnity fees, sessional GPs fed back that some practices were unaware that this was to account for all GPs working for the practice. This information was then sent out in our local newsletter to practices to help raise awareness.

As a sessional rep you can make a real difference for your colleagues, making their working lives easier in practice. I get a lot of satisfaction in protecting the interests of GPs, such as safe working conditions, adequate remuneration for work done and ensuring equal access to new innovative roles or opportunities. Having an LMC role also diversifies your portfolio and scope of interests. I enjoy the role as it's not only satisfying, but it also changes up my week.

I am currently an LMC Vice chair and have learnt a lot since the start as a trainee rep. So is it necessary for sessionals to join the LMC? Definitely. I would encourage sessionals and trainees to join the LMC because if we don't show up at the table to represent ourselves who will?

During the week of 26 April 2021 all GPs working in the Londonwide LMCs area should receive a nomination email and letter from Civitas, who independently administer our election process, with a deadline to stand of 28 May. If you are not currently receiving emails from Londonwide LMCs please contact brt@lmc.org.uk to make sure your details are up to date, so you can participate in both the nomination process and subsequent elections.