



## Editorial

## Reflections on leadership



We are all leaders. Whether in formal leadership roles or not, we take on this mantle throughout our lives in various different guises, most obviously for many as parents. Within the hospital setting, many staff assign this role to us simply because we are doctors. We admit, diagnose, treat, and discharge patients, decide what to prescribe and when to operate. From setting the strategic direction of a department or an organisation, to routine daily clinical activities, the medical team play a crucial role. The behaviours that we exhibit as doctors and leaders has a significant impact on those with whom we work, and ultimately, influences significantly the culture of the teams and organisations in which we work.

The skills required for effective leadership are not in-born. As the heaving shelves of bookstores worldwide might testify, there are many theories on the subject, which have evolved over time. In my experience, there is no ideal type, no perfect personality profile that sets you apart from the crowd and marks you out as a leader. As with everything else in life, there are a series of skills and behaviours that need to be learnt, considered, practised, and developed. These skills may be transactional, e.g., business cases, or behavioural, which are often much more difficult to acquire. They are difficult to measure, there is no exam, and yet whereas everyone has a view on what constitutes poor leadership, there is certainly no consensus on this. Although good clinical leadership is considered to be essential for the safe and effective running of health services, the teaching of leadership is not currently embedded within medical

education and is often only available to those who self-select as potential future leaders.

In the current issue, we are delighted to present the first in a series of occasional articles covering different personal perspectives on leadership. Drs Sharkey, Magee, and Trent are junior doctors undertaking a variety of roles, available at a national level, to develop their leadership skills. In their paper, they discuss the opportunities available to junior doctors to pursue the development of both their personal skills and future careers in this field, setting out their underlying views on the importance of doing so. As a Medical Director myself, I share many of their views on the vital nature of learning some of these skills to thrive in the complex world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century NHS. It is a lifelong journey with much for me, at least, still to learn. My thanks go out to these authors for their valuable contribution. A number of further articles in the series have been commissioned, which will encompass a range of issues salient to aspects of leadership and personal development, and I hope that you will find them both interesting and valuable in your own careers.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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