

# Introduction

As Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for Wales I have three main duties: to advise ministers on health issues; to lead the medical profession in Wales; and to advocate for better health on behalf of the people of Wales. This is my third annual CMO report and, as in previous reports, I aim to cover a range of issues which I hope will be of interest and relevance to politicians, patients and the public.

This year's report begins by describing the health status of our nation. The good news is that health indicators are continuing to improve but the recent levelling off of life expectancy has attracted a lot of interest in the last year and is a trend which we need to understand better and continue to monitor carefully. Obesity levels in the population are at a worrying level with childhood obesity being a particular concern – I am currently developing a healthy weight plan for Wales and we have recently embarked on a consultation seeking views on the actions we need to take. Our health and care system is challenged by the changing needs of an ageing society and the consequential increase in people who experience multiple diseases. Our response in Wales to these changing needs has recently been outlined in our new long-term health strategy "A Healthier Wales" and there is now an urgent need to look carefully at the services we provide and the way in which they are delivered.

Chapter 2 serves as a reminder of the Prudent Healthcare Principles, which we have established as a cornerstone of our health and care services and looks at how these enduring principles can be delivered though the development of a value-driven approach to service design, delivery and evaluation. It provides some examples from across the Welsh healthcare system of prudent healthcare in action and points in particular to the need for a rethinking of our approach to the outcomes of healthcare. We need to reset our healthcare system by shifting attention from indicators of service outputs towards outcomes which really matter to people who receive services.

Given that change in our health system is inevitable, the role of knowledge and information takes centre stage and so, chapter 3 lays out the importance of our work in research and innovation. The proud tradition of health service research that began with the work of Archie Cochrane on lung diseases affecting mining communities in the Welsh Valleys, continues today through a network of research centres, units and support systems. Research is often overlooked, but it is vitally important to the economy of Wales; to the effectiveness and efficiency of health services; and to the sustainability of our NHS.

This year's report concludes with a consideration of some of the challenges which we face in the area of health protection; these can arise from infections and from environmental threats. We live in an inter-connected world and recent events, such as the rise in cases of measles across Europe, new and importable diseases such as Ebola and Monkeypox, and the use of chemical agents all serve to remind us that we ignore health protection arrangements at our peril. I will be looking further at ways in which we need to strengthen this aspect of our public health system.

Thank you for your interest in this report; I would welcome feedback on any of the issues that I have covered.

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Please feel free to  
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