



SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT 2007-2008

Headline points for 2007-2008:

- AvMA took the opportunity of its 25th anniversary to help raise awareness and funds for the charity. A spectacular event was held at the Science Museum.
- Reaccreditation of AvMA's specialist clinical negligence solicitors was moved forward with most solicitors due for reaccreditation processed by the end of the year.
- Foundations were laid for the opening of a Manchester branch of our helpline, which will considerably increase the capacity of the helpline overall.
- Due to prudent containment of costs, successful fundraising and better than expected income from our conferences and lawyers service, the charity turned round a projected deficit for the year to a surplus to add to reserves.
- AvMA was awarded a new contract from the National Patient Safety Agency to manage a high profile project to recruit and support 'patient safety champions' as recommended in Safety First (DoH, 2006).

Advice, Information and Support

The helpline provided advice and support to 2,326 new callers in 2007-2008. During the year a total of 556 new written case files were opened. These figures are roughly the same as last year. In addition, we continued to deal with 461 ongoing written cases; sent out 1,110 information packs and an increasing number of members of the public made use of AvMA's website to download useful self-help information.

The introduction of trained volunteers to staff the helpline has proved a great success. In order to increase access to the helpline and also to bolster AvMA's presence in the North of the country, AvMA also developed plans to open a branch of the helpline in Manchester. AvMA is grateful to Potter Rees solicitors for donating office space for this project and to the many firms of solicitors who have agreed to release members of staff to volunteer on the helpline. The Manchester branch should significantly increase the number of calls taken in the next year. Senior Advice Worker, Steven Liddiard, has relocated to Manchester to oversee this project.

Influencing Policy & Practice

The two main new areas of policy work which AvMA were involved in during the year were taking part in the English Department of Health work on implementing the Health Professional regulation White Paper "Trust Assurance and Safety", and work with the Welsh Assembly Government and other stakeholders on planning for the Welsh version of the NHS Redress Scheme. (Ironically, nothing has been taken forward on the English scheme since passing of the NHS Redress Act).

As well as making a significant contribution to the development of the NHS Redress Scheme in Wales, AvMA underlined its commitment to the whole of the UK by responding to consultation on the legal system in Northern Ireland and launching its campaign to improve access to justice in

Scotland. A useful meeting was held with Scottish Health Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, to discuss a possible “no fault” compensation scheme in Scotland and the development of AvMA in Scotland.

AvMA also submitted formal responses to important consultations during the year, including: Healthcare Commission - Developing the Annual Health Check in 2007-2008; GMC Consultation on Consensual Disposal & Guidance to the Fitness to Practise Rules, July 2007; DCA (now Ministry of Justice) Consultation on the Law of Damages, July 2007; GMC Consultation on New Guidance on Consent and Making Decisions, August 2007; Ministry of Justice Consultation on The Statutory Duty for Doctors and other Public Service Personnel to report deaths to the Coroner with a view to improving the current system and improving patient safety, September 2007; Health Professions Council on Standards of Conduct, Performance & Ethics, September 2007; Welsh Assembly Consultation on Proposed NHS Redress (Wales) Measure, September 2007; Ministry of Justice's consultation on Coroner Reform and Additional Medical Advice, September 2007; Department of Health on the proposed new arrangements for handling Health and Social Care Complaints, October 2007; Ministry of Justice's consultation on Coroner reports to prevent further deaths: proposed amendments to Rule 43 of the Coroners Rules 1984, March 2008; Healthcare Commission on Developing the Annual Health Check in 2008/2009, March 2008; Scottish Civil Courts Review, March 2008.

In addition, AvMA continued to play an active role in fora such as the National Patient Safety Forum; Clinical Disputes Forum; and Civil Justice Council, and achieved considerable media coverage in the Press, Radio and TV.

We successfully completed the two year pilot ‘Patients for Patient Safety’ project, funded by the National Patient Safety Agency and were successful in tendering for a new contract to manage the project to recruit and support ‘patient safety champions’ (a project emanating from ‘Safety First’ (Department of Health 2006).

Legal Services

Reaccreditation of AvMA's specialist clinical negligence panel solicitors (those who were accredited 5 years or more ago) was taken forward during the year with the majority of those who were due for reaccreditation being processed.

The Lawyers Support Service actively managed to increase its membership in spite of a difficult environment for claimant solicitors. The support provided by AvMA and the rigorous reaccreditation process helps spread good practice and provide claimants access to genuinely specialist representation.

AvMA also provided support to medical experts and led the way in stimulating debate about experts meetings. The risk assessment service provided for after the event insurance providers continued to flourish and provide a valuable service.

Conferences Training & Publications

AvMA's medico-legal conferences have long been regarded as the best in the field and continue to flourish in spite of attempts at imitation and competition. The 2007 Annual Clinical Negligence Conference was held in Glasgow – the first time it has been held in Scotland. Attended by around 500 legal and medical experts and policymakers, the conference saw the launch of our ‘call for justice’ for victims of medical accidents in Scotland.

As well as the annual clinical negligence conference, we continued to deliver a range of top quality one-day events for clinical negligence specialists during the year. We also continued to expand our conferences and events in areas other than the traditional medico-legal area. We held very successful events, mainly for health provider staff and managers, such as the annual ‘NHS Complaints to Redress’ conference, and a particular success was the event held on Mental Health in October 2007. This helped us highlight a policy area of key concern to us. We plan to

expand our events work promoting good practice in patient safety and dispute resolution, and the key ethical and legal issues in healthcare today.

AvMA continued to edit the informative AvMA Journal within Clinical Risk and plan to redesign the journal in consultation with the publishers, the Royal Society of Medicine.

Plans for the future

AvMA has a rolling three year strategic plan and is half way through the plan for 2007-2010. Whilst it was not possible to relocate to new offices in 2008 as hoped, this remains a long term goal. Specific objectives for 2008-2010 include exploring possibilities for refining advice & information services to best meet current needs, including the possibility of providing specialist support for members of the public on Inquests and in health professional Fitness to Practise cases. Also, to expand our portfolio of conferences and risk assessment work.

Particular priorities for 2008-2009 are:

- campaigning for 'Being Open' a legal 'Duty of Candour'
- making a success of the 'Patients for Patient Safety' project and supporting patient safety champions
- influencing the implementation of the health professional regulation White Paper
- developing AvMA's work in Scotland

Finance

The charity enjoyed a much better year in 2007-2008 than expected, largely thanks to successful fundraising in connection with our 25th Anniversary, and good performance in generating income from conferences and legal services.

Income: £1,299,174

Expenditure: £1,217,739

AvMA generates the vast majority of its income itself (from conferences, legal services and donations) with only 19% coming from grants or contracts with public bodies. 59% of AvMA's expenditure is on staff costs.

For full details see the audited Report and Finance Statements for 2007-2008.

Members of the Council of Management 2007-2008

Ann Alexander (appointed May 2008)

Malcolm Alexander (appointed May 2008)

Celia Davies

Maeve Ennis (resigned June 2008)

Graham Girvan

Sir Donald Irvine CBE (resigned July 2007)

Dr Eva Jacobs

Alexandra Jones

Vincent Kika (appointed May 2008)

Rita Lewis

John Lyon-Taylor

Dr Umesh Prabhu

Jean Robinson

Barbara Ross

Siôn Simon MP

Clive Wilson