



The Royal College of Emergency Medicine

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Let's work together to
keep our patients safe
and our staff healthy



The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chair of the Health & Social Care Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

11 March 2020

Dear The Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP,

I understand that the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee will be taking evidence from Simon Stevens and colleagues from NHS England next week.

This College is extremely concerned about the capability of acute hospitals to respond to Coronavirus.

Even before this outbreak started, we were concerned about the capacity of acute hospitals to provide timely care.

We are finding that hospitals have a limited stock of side rooms where patients can be isolated. The end result is that the patients most at risk of this are waiting for a long time in the emergency department, frequently in corridors.

We reference a link below to our most recent winter flow publication (copy of the report herewith) which confirms the most recent stress.

https://www.rcem.ac.uk/RCEM/Quality_Policy/Policy/Winter_Flow_Project/RCEM/Quality-Policy/Policy/Winter_Flow_Project.aspx

The College has recently published its strategy for Emergency Medicine, RCEM CARES. This can be reviewed in full here on our website: <https://bit.ly/2W4Bbb2>

I'd like to draw your attention to some of the assistance the College is calling for (before the coronavirus outbreak) which included:

- a) Increase the staffed acute bed capacity in hospitals to maintain flow in Emergency Departments. We estimate that around 5,000 extra staffed beds are needed across the UK to achieve 85% bed occupancy, which allows adequate flow. This will need to increase alongside population growth.
- b) Reform pension taxation so that senior staff can work without incurring unpredictable and large tax bills, which is obviously not within Simon Stevens remit.

Excellence in Emergency Care

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- c) Ensure the NHS People Plan (England) and workforce planning in Devolved Nations recognises the importance of emergency care. These must tackle the culture challenges and resource shortages inherent in delivering an emergency service staffed by too few clinicians.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Gordon Miles', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gordon Miles
Chief Executive

