

## **The 1966 GP Contract and Sir James Cameron**

The 1966 contract was a seminal moment in the development of UK General Practice leading to recognition of the value of General Practice, the development of premises, the need for education and for facilitating the move to Group Practices.

To set the background to the Contract let me ask you to suspend your disbelief and take you back to a time when Consultant colleagues thought General Practice was a second class service that Consultant numbers had doubled since the NHS began but GP numbers had only gone up by 20%. That there was a recruitment crisis in General Practice with many doctors old and on the brink of retirement whilst others were emigrating. A time when workload was increasing, with increasing numbers of patients especially the young and old. Premises were inadequate and more support staff were needed. The number of medical students was insufficient. The Review body was limiting pay awards to minimal amounts.

Many doctors were radical and calling for fee for service, patient charges or leaving the NHS completely. It needed a steady head and calm clear leadership. James Cameron was the man for the hour.

Under his leadership the GP Charter was published and accepted by the profession.

The aims of the 1965 Charter:

- Increasing recruitment, reducing maximum list sizes to 2,000
- Undergraduate education orientated towards practice, and good postgraduate education
- Improved premises and equipment
- Adequate supporting staff
- Direct reimbursement of staff and premises
- Incentives for skills and experience
- Pay to reflect workload, skills and responsibility
- Reasonable working hours with time for study and leisure
- Proper pay for work done outside the normal working day
- A worthwhile, effective and satisfying career with clinical freedom in a personal family doctor service.

The negotiations took a year but at the end most of the aims had been incorporated in a new contract and the Red book provisions were familiar to those who worked before 2003. The contract produced vibrant General Practice at least until the 1990 contract.

The proposals went to the Review body that finally recognised the crisis, workload and responsibility and awarded a 30% increase.

UK General Practice had taken a giant leap forward. We continue to see the effects of the 1966 contract in the continuing development of UK General Practice. The Cameron Fund, the GP charity is also a legacy of Sir James Cameron.

Prior to 1966 GP pay had been top sliced to provide a premises to develop Group Practice. The Fund had not been publicized or used and had accumulated £800,000.

This money by rights belonged to the profession but returning the money had practical difficulties due to changes in partnership. The Treasury were keen to retain the money but James Cameron suggested and it was accepted on all sides that the money be used to start a GP charity. The Cameron Fund is named in his honour.

The fund came into existence in 1970 and supports our colleagues and their families who find themselves in desperate circumstances. Half of the income is derived from the original fund being invested and half from donations.

Dr Gary Culver  
Cameron Fund Trustee

6 October 2016