

CATHOLIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION (UK)



39, Eccleston Square, London, SW1V 1BX

E-mail: [president@catholicmedicalassociation.org.uk](mailto:president@catholicmedicalassociation.org.uk)

15<sup>h</sup> May 2014

Dear Dr Richmond and Dr Wilkinson,

The Catholic Medical Association (UK) represents Catholic doctors, nurses, healthcare workers and students of the healthcare professions throughout the United Kingdom.

We are concerned about reports in the media relating to recently-published guidelines from the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health on “The Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Diploma trainees (DFSRH / NDFSRH) who express Conscientious Objections”. We appreciate that media reports are not always accurate and fairly representative. Having carefully studied and discussed the statement from the Faculty we have two questions for which we seek clarification:

1. Will doctors and nurses who do not hold the FSRH Diploma still be allowed to participate in areas of sexual and reproductive healthcare to which they have no moral objections? These areas may include psychosexual counselling, management of STIs, fertility management, natural family planning etc.

2. Will doctors and nurses who do not hold the FSRH Diploma still be allowed to train and successfully complete training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, allowing them to compete for and obtain professional positions in these areas of medicine and nursing?

These questions are asked in concern for Catholic and other healthcare workers who may have moral reservations about participation in certain practices considered legitimate by others and also for prospective patients, especially women, who may wish to receive healthcare from doctors and nurses who share their own religious and moral convictions.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Robert Hardie

President CMA (UK)



## Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare

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20 May 2014

Dr Robert Hardie  
President  
Catholic Medical Association (UK)  
39, Eccleston Square  
London  
SW1V 1BX

Dear Dr Hardie

Thank you for your recent letter (dated 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014) to myself and Dr David Richmond seeking clarification on two areas in the FSRH Guidelines on conscientious objection for potential trainees. We appreciate that you have given this some thought and are grateful that you have come to us to seek clarification rather than relying solely on media reporting of this issue.

The qualifications covered by the FSRH Guidelines are awarded under the auspices of the RCOG, but the content and syllabi are governed by the Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare which is a Faculty of the College but independently governed. Hence I am replying, as President of the FSRH, having liaised with David Richmond PRCOG, to respond to your concerns.

I will address each of your questions in turn:

1. The Faculty considers the FSRH Diploma to be the 'gold standard' in supporting doctors and nurses in delivering community consultations in sexual and reproductive healthcare. However the Faculty would not seek to prevent any doctor or nurse who does not hold the FSRH Diploma from working in any area of sexual and reproductive healthcare. We would expect any doctor or nurse to follow the relevant guidelines from the GMC/NMC when they are thinking through how they would manage this situation. Ultimately it is a decision for the employer in a service (and their commissioners) to be satisfied that the staff employed are competent to carry out the work for which they are employed.
2. The FSRH Diploma is not a requirement for doctors wishing to specialise in Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Trainees in O&G can still complete their training without this provided they fulfil the knowledge criteria. Those with a religious or moral objection to being involved in contraception care can opt out of doing the practical elements of the RCOG's Sexual and Reproductive Health Module.

I do hope that these answers directly address your members' concerns. The Faculty includes clinicians with a broad range of moral, religious and ethical views and this is recognised and welcomed. I believe that we are more understanding on these issues than has recently been suggested.

If you have any additional questions, I would be happy to meet with you to discuss them.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Wilkinson', written in a cursive style.

**Chris Wilkinson, President**

**Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare**

CC Dr David Richmond, President, RCOG  
Jane Hatfield, CEO, FSRH