It is not my usual practice to report upon either conferences or publications undertaken by organisations such as Medical Royal Colleges. However I would like to make an exception with respect to a conference I attended recently at the Royal College of Physicians in London. The title of the event was ‘How Doctors Can Close the Gap: Tackling Social Determinants of Health Through Culture Change, Advocacy and Education’. The broad theme of the day was a broad consideration of the inequalities that exist in health care with a rising gap in health outcomes between the richest and those who are less well off. This trend is evident in most countries as well as in the UK. The role of physicians in reducing this inequality gap was discussed throughout the day. Presentations were made by those who had actually embraced the principle of advocacy and had made a real difference to the communities they serve. It was refreshing to learn of hard examples of good practice rather than mere rhetoric. The event was timely considering the Marmot report on health inequalities (Fair society, healthy lives). Doctors have a clear role to play in this area; there is a risk that the lack of equity in health care will increase in coming years as a result of the economic downturn. The RCP have published a policy document with this in mind; it may be accessed via: http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/professional-Issues/Public-Health/Pages/tackling-health-inequalities.aspx

I commend this to you and urge you to read it.

Michael Bannon
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