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Outgoing RCGP chair Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard is to head up a new National Academy for Social Prescribing, which will be backed by £5m of government funding.

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Outgoing RCGP chair Professor Helen Stokes-Lampard (Photo: Pete Hill)

The DHSC said that the new, independent academy would help ensure more patients can benefit from social prescribing by sharing best practice, developing training and accreditation and improving the evidence base for social prescribing.

Professor Stokes-Lampard, who stands down from her RCGP role in November, said she was 'thrilled' to have been appointed chair of the academy.

'Social prescribing has always been so close to my heart as a practising GP. It's what good GPs have always done in terms of getting the best help and support for our patients beyond the medicines we also provide them with,' Professor Stokes-Lampard said.

'I'm looking forward to starting work with colleagues from so many sectors to bring social prescribing into the mainstream, to train and educate social prescribers of the future and to establish a great evidence base and raise the profile of this fantastic initiative.'

Social prescribing

Health secretary Matt Hancock said that he wanted every patient in the country to have access to social prescriptions in the same way as they do medical care.

'This academy is much more important than any one individual. It's about all of us in health, arts, culture, sport, communities coming together around one simple principle: that prevention is better than cure,' Mr Hancock said.

'Social prescribing is a huge part of this. There are thousands of people up and down the country right now who are already benefiting from activities like reading circles, choir groups and walking football.

'The National Academy for Social Prescribing will act as a catalyst to bring together the excellent work already being done across the NHS and beyond, building on our NHS long-term plan's ambition to get over 2.5 million more people benefitting from personalised care within the next five years.'

As part of the five-year GP contract in England, primary care networks will receive funding to employ one social prescriber this year. It is expected that the number of social prescribing link workers in general practice will expand further as funding

for additional staff increases over the five years of the contract.

NHS England has provided around £650,000 for the initial set-up costs of the National Academy for Social Prescribing this year and the DHSC will provide a £5m grant to the academy in 2020/21.

Professor Martin Marshall will succeed Professor Stokes-Lampard as chair of the RCGP in November.



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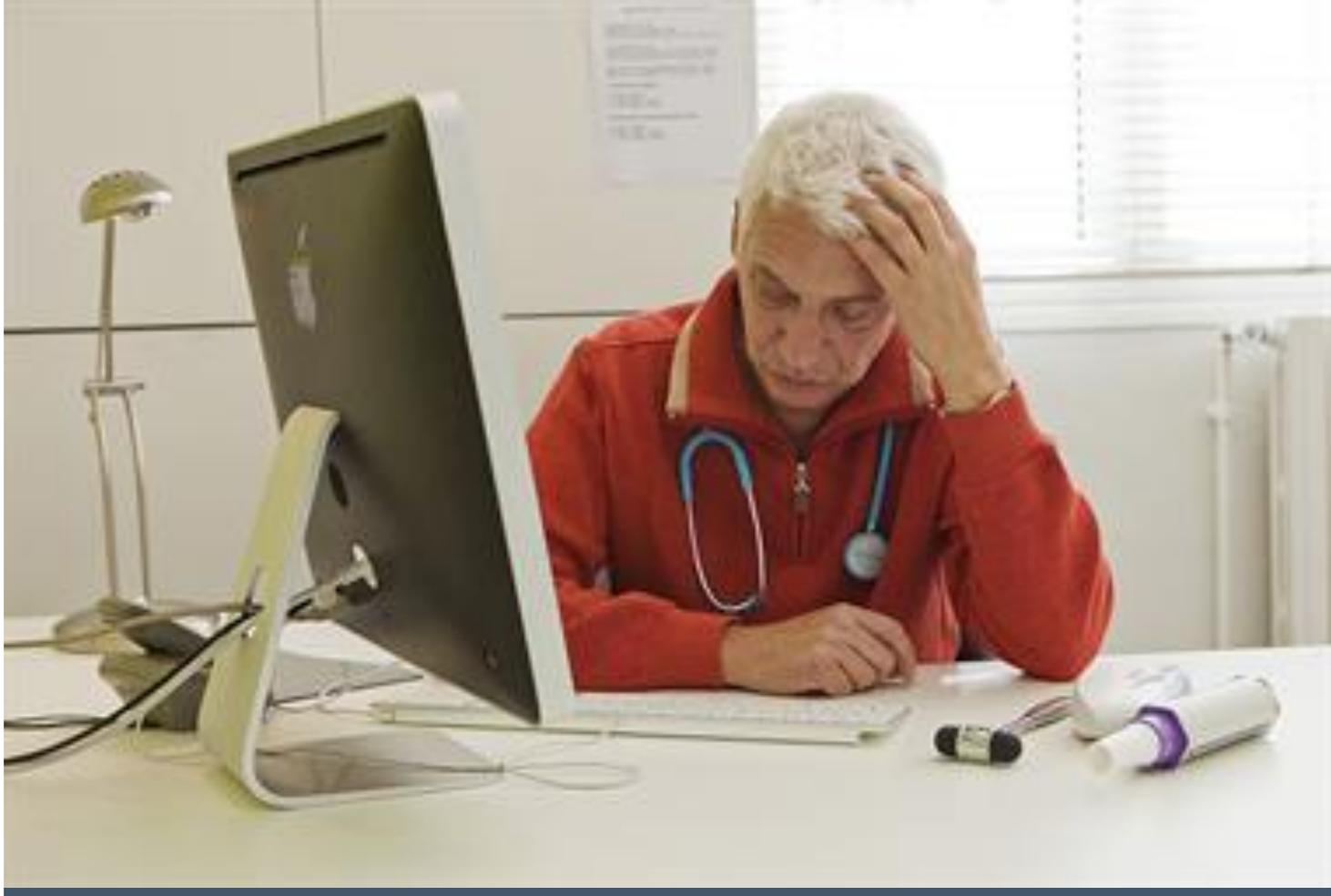
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