

## ROLE MODEL

# Andrew Rowland

The consultant paediatrician talks to **Erin Dean** about his passion for protecting the rights of children



I know this job can really make a difference to children's lives

GUZELIAN

## NOMINATED BY SUPARNA DASGUPTA

"I have known Andrew since 2005 and he has consistently offered the best care for his patients.

"He is extremely hard working and goes the extra mile for every child that he reviews in his clinic. There are numerous incidents where his advocacy has flagged up concerns leading to change in practice and care.

"Andrew is a keen academic and has a wide research portfolio, but above all is his passion and advocacy for all sections of society. He founded the charity SickKids, which has dramatically improved outcomes for children with disabilities and those living with asthma in south west Cambodia

"As the officer for child protection for the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, Andrew has led on crucial work. This includes revising the strategy for the child protection standing committee, creating a new migrant children advisory group, and a new policy on mandatory reporting of child abuse."

Suparna Dasgupta is a consultant paediatrician for Manchester Local Care Organisation.

## NOMINATE A ROLE MODEL

To nominate someone who has been a role model during your medical career, send their name, job title, and the reason for your nomination to [arimmer@bmj.com](mailto:arimmer@bmj.com)

Manchester based consultant paediatrician Andrew Rowland specialises in child protection, an area he would never have imagined working in as a young doctor.

"I was recycling my student notes recently," he says. "There were ring binders full of paper, and I found only two pages of notes on safeguarding. We just weren't really taught about child protection, refugee health, or the needs of looked after children."

Doctors need to be aware of the often hidden difficulties that their patients may face, says Rowland, who works for Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust and Manchester Local Care Organisation. "All doctors will care for someone at some point who has been a refugee or who has been abused," Rowland says. They need to consider this in the care they give.

Rowland has a portfolio career. One of his roles sees him working in the community, undertaking assessments of children who are suspected of having been abused. He also undertakes health assessments of unaccompanied children seeking refuge, asylum, and protection in the UK.

Rowland has been appointed as an honorary professor for children's rights, law, and advocacy at the University of Salford and as an officer for child protection at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. He is also lead employer medical director for Mersey and West Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, which takes up about 30% of his time.

Rowland discovered a passion for working with children as a medical student when he joined a welcoming and supportive paediatric team on a placement. "I often felt like I was in the way as a student, but my paediatric placement at Derbyshire Children's Hospital was different straight away," he says. "The junior doctors and consultants were absolutely brilliant, and every single one of us had a useful role in that department."

This approach has informed how Rowland works with students and juniors ever since. "Every single student or doctor who comes to our clinic will be part of our team and help us care for patients in some way," he says.

Rowland trained in paediatrics with a subspecialty in children's emergency medicine in hospitals around the north west, qualifying as a consultant in 2009. "A lot of things have changed for the better since I was training," he says. "We saw a lot of really sick children with meningococcal disease, but since vaccination came in this has become so much rarer."

After a decade working in paediatric emergency departments, Rowland felt ready for a change and was keen to explore safeguarding further.

In 2014, he received a Churchill fellowship. "It was the most amazing opportunity," he says. "It allowed me to travel to Cambodia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the US to learn more about improving detection of child protection concerns in healthcare."

Rowland still uses his emergency medicine skills, just in a different setting. "I care for children with significant illness and injury and across a broad age range, it's just the building that has changed," he says. "With this job I know it can really make a difference to children's lives."

He actively encourages students and clinicians at every level to spend time at his community clinic so that they can take a knowledge of safeguarding, child protection, and refugee health back to the areas they work in.

Rowland hopes for a better future for the children he works with, many of whom have been failed repeatedly by society. "I have a lot of hope that, if we can get things right for the most vulnerable children, then when they become adults they will be a source of change for good in our societies," he says. "This is a powerful inspiration."

Erin Dean, *The BMJ*

Cite this as: *BMJ* 2024;384:q44