



# Introduction

Dr Peter Nightingale, President

**G**uidelines for the Provision of Anaesthetic Services' (GPAS) is now a well-established and valued publication produced by the Royal College of Anaesthetists for anaesthetists with managerial responsibilities and other healthcare managers. First appearing in 1994 as 'Guidance for Purchasers', it has been revised under the current title twice, first in 1999 and again in 2004. This new edition for 2009 incorporates developments in clinical practice, service delivery and education in the last five years, while retaining the original format. A new section has been added to describe anaesthetic services provided outside the operating theatre. The sections on pain management reflect the additional authority derived from the establishment of the new Faculty of Pain Medicine. Each section can be downloaded from the College website, beginning with the general principles for delivering anaesthetic services, followed by specialist areas of practice.

Guidance and standards documents should always be seen as works in progress in which a balance must be struck between general principles and fine detail, between expert opinion and evidence, and between minimal and aspirational standards. They do not replace the need for experienced clinical judgement exercised by individual anaesthetists in the best interests of their patients. Anaesthesia was one of the first clinical disciplines to set standards of practice supported by audit of outcomes, and we therefore continue to make an explicit link between standards and audit by providing hyperlinks to the relevant sections in another of our publications: 'Raising the Standard: A Compendium of Audit Recipes'. We welcome comments and advice from clinicians and

managers which will enable new information obtained from audit and research to be incorporated in GPAS regularly, to ensure that the College's guidance reflects, and supports, best practice.

In developing these guidelines we have relied on the experience of individual specialists and specialist organisations and societies as our main resource, supported by evidence where available. The editorial process has been managed by Dr John Curran and Professor Julian Bion on behalf of Council, Dr Helen Wise as external reviewer, and most particularly by Mrs Edwina Jones of our Professional Standards Directorate. Each section has been written or revised by one or more content experts, and the college is grateful to them for their work on behalf of the profession and the patients we serve.