

Friday 18 September 2009

Issue 2

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GPC meeting

The GPC met on 17th September 2009 and this newsletter provides a summary of the main items discussed.

Flu vaccination programme

Following the GPC's acceptance of the health departments' flu vaccination offer, a deal has now been formally announced. The chairman of GPC wrote to the profession outlining the deal earlier this week and the letter can be [found on the BMA website](#). Several detailed issues about the implementation of the deal are in the process of being finalised and the GPC will issue further guidance in the near future.

Pandemic flu update

GPC representatives continue to meet regularly with the NHSE and DH to discuss issues surrounding H1N1. The arrangements under the emergency SFE (eSFE) are currently under discussion.

A new version of the joint GPC/RCGP/DH flu guidance is also being revised and should be published within the next few weeks.

The latest news on flu is available on the BMA website, including an updated Q&A, in the section ['pandemic flu information for GPs'](#).

Death in service benefits for locum GPs

The Department of Health recently wrote to PCTs with guidance on how locum GPs should be protected for death in service benefits during the flu pandemic. GPC representatives have been informed that PCTs would have to find the necessary funding to enact this guidance. The GPC will be urging the Department of Health to ensure that this occurs, and will suggest that further guidance is issued to PCTs on appropriate locum agreements.

Negotiations for 2010/11

Flu vaccination discussions have dominated negotiators' meetings with NHS Employers over the last couple of months. The flu deal means there is no longer a need to discuss QOF changes for next year. Forthcoming negotiations on other issues for 2010/11 will determine how next year's DDRB uplift is applied across the contract. In addition, GPC negotiators wish to discuss patient survey arrangements and DESs for next year.

Practice boundaries

The GPC discussed Andy Burnham's announcement yesterday that practice boundaries will be removed within a year. GPC members highlighted a number of practical problems with such a scheme. However, while the negotiators are open to discussing this with NHSE over the coming months, this proposal has been put forward on previous occasions over a number of years, and there are a number of concerns which would need to be resolved.

DDRB evidence

The BMA is submitting evidence to the DDRB at the end of this month. As usual, the GPC has prepared evidence on GP contractors, trainees, trainers, educators and salaried GPs. The GPC will submit supplementary evidence when it reaches an agreement with NHSE on the way that this uplift will be applied across the various funding streams.

Sessional GP representation

The GPC has approved the remit and personnel of a new working group which is being set up to look into the representation of sessional GPs within the BMA, and at a local level. The group will include representatives from the GPC Sessional GPs and Representation Subcommittees, and the majority of its members will be sessional GPs. It will report by the end of this session, after careful consideration of all of the issues and information available.

Revalidation

The GPC remains concerned about how revalidation is going to be funded, and raises this issue with the Department of Health at every opportunity.

As part of its consultation on the role of responsible officers, the Department of Health has published an impact assessment on their introduction, [available online](#).

The NHS Revalidation Support Team is organising "Pathfinder" pilots on revalidation, which are intended to test how the component parts of revalidation work together. The pilots are due to be concluded towards the end of 2010. Details are [available online](#).

Sealing electronic records and GP2GP transfer

Some GP clinical systems include functionality that allows a GP to restrict access to elements of patients' electronic health records to different levels of user within the practice. This functionality is not consistent across systems and any data that are hidden are likely to be revealed when the patient record is transferred to another GP clinical system. This can happen when a patient's record is transferred to another practice via traditional paper record transfer or GP2GP or following a data migration to another GP clinical system in the practice.

GPs are therefore advised to inform patients, who want elements of their electronic health record to be kept confidential, that the information is not likely to remain hidden when the record is transferred to another system, either electronically or via paper transfer.

DVLA - Consent for the release of relevant medical information for patients

On Monday, 17 August, new rules called *Consent by Assurance* were implemented by the DVLA relating to the release of relevant medical information for patients applying for driving licences.

The BMA has given agreement that the DVLA no longer needs to provide the patient's written consent for access to the relevant parts of their records for the purposes of being granted a driving licence. The documents in appendix 1 explain the new rules to GPs and to driving licence applicants.

This agreement might generate concerns amongst GPs about patient confidentiality. [The GMC website](#) has a frequently asked questions supplement to their confidentiality guidance and one query advises that doctors should:

“Obtain, or have seen, written consent to the disclosure from the patient or a person properly authorised to act on the patient’s behalf. You may, however, accept **written assurances from an officer of a government department that the patient’s written consent has been given.**”

The BMA has taken legal advice about a system of accepting such assurances from a government department, and received written assurances from the DVLA, in the form of a written legal indemnity.

Introducing the licence to practise in 2009

The GMC is introducing the licence to practise on 16 November 2009. From this date any doctor wishing to practise medicine in the UK will, by law, need to hold both registration and a licence to practise.

More information about licensing is [available on the GMC’s website](#) and if you have any questions about licensing, please email licensing@gmc-uk.org.

Quality conference

The GPC is organising a one-day conference on “Quality in modern general practice: Getting ready for the new agenda” on Friday 4 December 2009 at BMA House, London. The programme and conference booking form are available at appendix 2.

It is vital that general practitioners, LMCs and PCTs are fully informed about the forthcoming changes to the quality agenda facing the profession - namely, registration with the Care Quality Commission and practice accreditation. These policies and initiatives will have a significant impact on general practice. The conference will consider the new quality agenda, discuss what the changes are and why they have been introduced, and how these changes will affect GPs, LMCs and PCO quality leads.

Please note that the conference is being held the day after the LMC Secretaries conference. For those who are attending on 3 December, please ensure that you have completed the separate booking form for the Quality conference. If you have not yet received confirmation of your attendance at the Quality conference, then please do re-apply.

Finally, please feel free to publicise the conference to your PCO quality leads and to your local GPs.

Sessional GP conference

The BMA is holding a one day educational conference for sessional GPs entitled 'Recognise your Talents, Realise Opportunities: Key steps for sessional GPs' on Friday 13 November 2009.

The aim of the conference is to provide salaried and locum GPs with the tools that they need to succeed in their careers. It will be divided into three key areas:

- Step 1 - Marketing yourself
- Step 2 - Effective planning and career development: making the job work for you
- Step 3 - How to meet the challenges of revalidation.

This event will be of interest to all current salaried GPs (including Retainer Scheme GPs) and GP locums. It will also be relevant to those considering becoming a salaried or locum GP. The cost to attend is £65 + VAT for BMA members and £225 + VAT for non-members.

For further details, including details about how to book, [please visit the BMA website.](#)

Notification of the number of GPs represented by your LMC

A few LMCs have still not informed the GPC secretariat of how many GPs they represent. If you have not already done so, please can you ensure that your LMC sends these figures to Msimmonds@bma.org.uk by **30 September 2009**.

Many thanks to all those who have already provided this information.

Media coverage report

Please find attached (appendix 3) a GPC media coverage report prepared by the BMA's press office, detailing GPC media activity during the last few weeks.

GPC secretariat

A copy of our staffing structure to reflect staffing changes is attached at appendix 4. We would be grateful if LMCs would direct all enquiries to their liaison officer. A copy of the LMC regional structure is also attached at appendix 5.

The GPC next meets on 15 October 2009, and LMCs are invited to submit items for discussion. You may like to review these, beforehand, with the representatives in your area who serve on the GPC. The closing date for items is 6 October 2009. It would be helpful if items could be emailed to Julie Goodway at jgoodway@bma.org.uk. You may also like to use the GPC's listservers to exchange views and ideas.

GPC News

GPC News is available via the Internet, via the BMA's web pages: www.bma.org.uk

LMCs are reminded that their regional representatives can provide more detailed information about the issues covered in GPC News, and other matters. Other members of the GPC would also be pleased to accept invitations to LMC meetings wherever possible. Their names and addresses are in the GPC Yearbook. The secretariat can also provide a written background brief if required, but it would be helpful to have such requests well in advance of your meetings.

Finally, if LMCs require assistance on local issues, they can also contact the BMA's local offices: addresses are on page 3 of the GPC's yearbook.

This newsletter has been sent to:

- Secretaries of LMCs and LMC offices
- Members of the GPC
- Members of the GP trainees subcommittee
- Members of the sessional GPs subcommittee