

GPC News

Friday 18 July 2008

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GPC meeting

The GPC met on 17 July 2008 and this newsletter provides a summary of the main items discussed.

Report on main negotiating issues

Please find attached (appendix 1) the written report from the GPC negotiators submitted to the committee ahead of the meeting and revised in the light of the updates given at the meeting.

Implementation of DDRB recommendations for 2008/09

The formal consultation on the implementation of the recommendations of the DDRB for the current year is now underway. Further to the exchange of correspondence soon after publication of the report, between Hamish Meldrum, as Chairman of Council, and the Secretary of State for Health regarding the implementation of the recommendations, the issue of retrospective introduction of changes to the SFE about which the GPC had concerns on legal grounds appears to have now been largely resolved. The legal advice has clarified that provided the proper consultation procedures are followed, the Department can implement changes to the SFE. We are seeking to resolve the outstanding legal issues in our response to the consultation process.

Rather than implement the changes to the SFE retrospectively, the Department is consulting on implementation of the changes to the global sum and correction factor with effect from 1 October. For practices which would lose because of this delay, the consultation includes provision for a one-off payment to be made to compensate for the loss of income.

The negotiators have met representatives of the Department of Health and are responding formally to the consultation.

The extended hours DES and clinical DES specifications are part of this consultation and, as the consultation is still in progress, these will not come into effect until the publication of the amended SFE. The GPC will be issuing guidance on the DESs once they are finalised.

Negotiations for 2009/10

A meeting has been held with NHS Employers to begin discussions on possible changes to the contract and the pay uplift for 2009/10. In conducting these negotiations, the GPC negotiating team have been intent on ensuring that matters are concluded in plenty of time for the DDRB to recommend on the level of uplift.

NHS Next Stage Review

Lord Darzi's review of the NHS in England, the 'Next Stage Review' culminated at the beginning of July with the publication of three final reports.

High Quality Care for All, the main report of the review, was followed by 'High Quality Workforce', a report setting out detailed recommendations in relation to workforce planning, education and training, and 'Our Vision for Primary and Community Care' which set out a vision for the growth and development of primary and community care services.

These three reports, along with a summary of each one, can be found on the BMA website at: www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/HubDarziReviews

The GPC intends to review the main report and the primary and community care vision over the summer.

In addition to the three reports, a consultation on a proposed NHS constitution has been launched.

The BMA has also produced a position statement setting out the main concerns over some aspects of the review process as a whole and the proposals made in the early stages of the review. This statement and details of the proposed NHS constitution can be found at the web address above.

Support Your Surgery Campaign

The GPC Communications Working Group reported to GPC that 1,236,085 signatures had been collected during the three weeks of the Support Your Surgery Campaign, demonstrating a phenomenal level of public support for NHS general practice and strong opposition to Government plans.

It was noted that campaign's success could not have been achieved without the hard work of GP practices and their staff, LMCs and patient groups around the country.

The Committee agreed that it was vital to capitalise on the momentum built up during phase 1 of the campaign, and the Communications Working Group confirmed that, together with their dedicated campaign manager, they were currently developing a follow up poster campaign and a number of other projects.

Elections - GPC Negotiators

An election was held for three positions on the GPC negotiating team. The results of the election are (in alphabetical order):

Dr Peter Holden
Dr Beth McCarron-Nash
Dr Richard Vautrey

Following changes made to GPC standing orders in 2007, Drs Peter Holden and Richard Vautrey will serve a one year term having been re-elected to the team, and Dr Beth McCarron-Nash will serve a three year term.

Changes to medical regulation

The GPC remains concerned about the planned changes to medical regulation proposed in the White Paper (Trust, Assurance and Safety). However, the committee supported the BMA's Working Party on the GMC's view that it would be preferable for the BMA's position to aim to limit some of the proposals' impact and try to deliver their more positive aspects in the best way possible for all concerned.

Practice accreditation

The GPC discussed the Primary Medical Care Provider Accreditation (PMCPA) scheme which is being developed by the RCGP in England. Accreditation would allow all primary medical providers to demonstrate the quality of service they provide and support practices to develop and raise standards. Current proposals are England-only, but the GPC envisages the scheme eventually being implemented UK-wide. The committee was supportive of the principle of practice accreditation and keen for the GPC to get involved in development of the scheme, particularly how the scheme would be funded, managed and implemented. Minimising bureaucracy and duplication of work in particular would be a key consideration for the GPC when influencing the development of the scheme.

It was felt that the scheme should be professionally led by the RCGP and GPC with minimal Government involvement. The GPC will work collaboratively with the College to review the results of the pilot studies which are currently underway and develop the scheme in accordance with the committee's views.

Childhood immunisation vaccine shortages

The GPC recently sent out a briefing from the DH sent in response to reports from LMCs of a shortage of Pedical childhood immunisation vaccine. We are aware that shortages appear to be continuing in some areas and we will be writing to NHSE and the DH asking for this to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

GP Systems of Choice (GPSoC) PCT-Practice Agreement Guidance (England Only)

Guidance has been developed on GPSoC jointly with NHS Connecting for Health (CfH) and this can be found at appendix 2. There is a section of Frequently Asked Questions on pages 6-9 which covers the key issues likely to arise in discussions between practices and PCTs.

The sections on escalation and dispute resolution, in the FAQs on pages 7-9 and paragraph 4.6 on pages 11 & 12, are of particular importance and especially the paragraphs concerning Health Service Body Status. It is essential that practices understand how to trigger the dispute resolution process. In addition, we would encourage LMCs to work with their PCTs to ensure that there are local points of escalation to resolve any disputes relating to the delivery of IM&T services.

If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact Matthew Isom in the GPC Secretariat: misom@bma.org.uk

Further information about GPSoC can be accessed at www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/systemsandservices/gpsupport/gpsoc

NHS Choices (England Only)

The latest release of NHS Choices includes three new important features. A series of 'NHS Guides' to common long-term conditions are designed to help those at risk of, or who suffer from long-term conditions, to better understand and manage their illness. These cover stroke, diabetes, asthma, depression, and dementia.

A new pregnancy care planner provides women with a step-by-step guide to each stage of their pregnancy and information to make important choices about ante-natal care, type of birth, and maternity services.

NHS Choices now includes survival data for four procedures. Standardised mortality ratios are used to band each hospital trust into one of four bands.

Please use the following link to access more details about the latest release from NHS Choices www.nhs.uk/aboutNHSChoices/Documents/R5shortbriefingnote.pdf
www.nhs.uk/Pages/homepage.aspx

The contract for the delivery of NHS Choices for the next three years has been awarded to Capita, who take over the £80 million contract from Dr Foster Intelligence in August.

Dispensing Doctors - Pharmacy White Paper Consultation (England Only)

Dawn Primarolo MP, Minister for Public Health, released a written statement to Parliament on 17 July announcing that the further consultation on the structure of pharmacy services, including the "Control of Entry" provisions relating to dispensing doctors, will be published next month. The consultation process will include further "listening events". We have no further information about either the consultation document, or the listening events, at this stage, but will inform LMCs via the listserver as soon as we do. The GPC and the Dispensing Doctors' Association continue to work together on this matter. The full written statement can be found at appendix 3.

NPfIT National Local Ownership Programme (NLOP)

We understand that PCTs should have submitted their IT plans to SHAs. These plans should be available to see and we would advise that LMCs contact their PCTs to determine what plans the PCT has for IT. This information will be useful to compare with funds for IT and improvements in IT in each LMC area. The GPC secretariat would be grateful if LMCs could pass on these plans so that they can be collated. Please submit these to misom@bma.org.uk.

Fraud

The BMA's Private Practice Committee has drawn to our attention that both the NHS Counterfraud Service and private medical insurance companies have been much more active in seeking out fraud than has been the case in the past. New legislation under the Fraud Act 2006 makes it much easier for people to fall foul of the law.

A number of private practitioners have been brought before the GMC over issues of fraud and the BMA is developing guidance for private practitioners to help them avoid accusations of fraudulent behaviour. During research it has been noted that the changed definitions of fraud do not require a perpetrator to have made any personal gain. They need to have had the intention of gaining or causing a loss or risk of loss to another but the gain or loss does not need actually to have been made.

The Private Practice Committee has noted general practitioners could therefore fall foul of the Act merely by trying to be 'kind' to a patient by, for instance, by omitting adverse information from a medical report, as this could be interpreted as resulting in a loss to the medical insurance company. We would be grateful if this concern could be brought to the attention of constituents.

LMC conference - update

The 2008 LMC conference elected the following as members of the conference agenda committee for 2008-09:

Chairman: Fay Wilson

Deputy chairman: Mary Church

Agenda Committee: Gill Beck
David Grant
Hal Maxwell

Stuart Blake
Michael Ingram
Peter Swinyard

Guy Watkins

The dates of next year's conference will be announced in the near future. We will soon write to LMC secretaries for confirmation of the number of GPs their LMC represents so that the agenda committee can determine the number of seats allocated to each LMC.

LMC secretaries conference - update

This year's LMC secretaries conference will be held on Thursday 6 November 2008. Further information and an application form will be sent out shortly.

Media coverage report

Please find attached (appendix 4) a GPC media coverage report prepared by the BMA's press office, detailing GPC media activity during the last few weeks.

GPC news - index

The GPC news index for the 2007-2008 session is enclosed (appendix 5).

<p>The GPC next meets on 18 September 2008, 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 9 September. It would be helpful if items could be emailed to Catharina Ohman-Smith at cohman-smith@bma.org.uk. You may also like to use the GPC's listservers to exchange views and ideas.</p>
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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