



Dear Colleague

Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspections

I know many of you are concerned about CQC inspections. Last week, I represented GPC at CQC's inaugural Advisory Group on General Practice invited by Professor Steve Field, the new Chief Inspector of General Practice.

We heard about proposals for new practice inspections to commence next April, with teams that may include GPs, practice nurses, practice managers and GP trainees. I reiterated the need for a supportive environment, rather than promoting a culture of fear, and that inspections must be proportionate, taking into account resource constraints and local circumstance.

Furthermore, anecdotes of poor practice must not be used to distort the reality which is that the overwhelming majority of hard-working GPs provide high quality care which is appreciated by patients. I also reiterated our deep concern regarding proposed practice ratings, which, if simplistic, could run the risk of creating damaging league tables, and GPC will seek to influence the development of these.

I had further opportunity to discuss this issue at an enjoyable and stimulating event this week at the King's Fund, hosted by its Chief Executive, Professor Chris Ham.

Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body (DDRB)

Moving onto our pay, I was part of a BMA delegation that, on Monday, gave evidence to the DDRB, which makes recommendations about doctors' pay to government.

Last year, the Government failed to implement the DDRB's recommendations in full for GPs. This is on the back of GPs iniquitously receiving a real terms successive pay cut for the previous two years, at a time when other NHS staff had a public sector pay freeze.

I presented a strong case to the DDRB for GPs receiving a fair pay award, which fully recognises our rising expenses. This is crucial to improve general practice retention and recruitment levels, if we are to have a workforce able to deliver the drive towards more community-based patient care.

NHS walk-in centre closures

I would like to draw your attention to a couple of recent important NHS policy publications. The first is the review by Monitor on the closure of walk-in centres and the impact on patient choice and access. However, it may have been more useful for Monitor to have instead been asked to look at why walk-in centres were commissioned in the first place, which would have provided some answers.

The creation of GP-led walk-in centres was unfortunately driven by political imperative, in which each PCT was compelled to have at least one centre, regardless of local need. As a result, many walk-in services have offered poor value for money, with insufficient demand, while others have simply duplicated existing services, and hence have since been decommissioned. This has cost the taxpayer dearly in the processes of tendering, procuring and providing these services. Furthermore, there has been scant evidence that such walk-in centres have reduced A&E attendance or pressures.

It is therefore vital that we learn from this and do not repeat the mistakes of the past. In a climate of austerity, shrinking NHS resources must be used wisely and responsibly to meet the needs of patients on the basis of evidence.

[Read the Monitor review report](#)

Urgent care services

Last month also saw the publication of Professor Sir Bruce Keogh's review Transforming Urgent and Emergency Care Services in England. The report refreshingly recognised that hospital pressures require a 'whole system approach', with integration between the range of providers in urgent care, rather than the non-evidence based portrayal that GP opening hours are somehow the cause of hospital pressures.

There is a strong focus on patient self-care at the beginning of an urgent care pathway. The Government has also announced £150 million to reduce A&E winter pressures. In the context of Sir Bruce's review, it would be wholly logical to use this resource in a whole system approach including investment in general practice and community services, to enable more proactive management of patients in the community, aiming to avoid hospital attendance.

[Read Sir Bruce's review report](#)

Other engagements

Last month I was a keynote speaker at the Dispensing Doctors' Association

annual conference. As a London GP where there is no dispensing practice, it provided a valuable insight into the immense value that dispensing doctors offer their patients, in providing them with accessible and prompt medication.

I was part of a panel discussion at the NHS Alliance annual conference last week, where there was lively discussion on our recently negotiated GP contract, and which was received favourably from all as a way forward for general practice and our patients.

I also attended Kent LMC's annual GP conference, in which I presented the contract changes and had fruitful discussion with local GPs.

On Tuesday night this week, I was the guest speaker at South Essex BMA Division annual dinner, where I was treated to a wonderful festive evening of good food, music and dance.

Yesterday, I spoke at the annual LMC secretaries conference, and enjoyed meeting LMC secretaries from across the UK, who do a tremendous job in looking after the interests of local GPs. The day was thoroughly successful with a mix of workshops, presentations from Former Royal College of GPs Chair Clare Gerada and Senior Fellow at the King's Fund Nigel Edwards and a useful Q and A session with the negotiators.'

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And finally, it was very humbling to be selected to be in the Health Service Journal's BME Pioneers list last week; an accolade I shared with some other BMA colleagues.

New guidance

We have also produced guidance this month on:

- [Arrangements for locums to receive flu immunisations](#)
- [Christmas opening hour arrangements for practices](#)

Winter pressures

We have also been working to help support your practice and patients through the winter. Each GP practice in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland will soon receive two posters from GPC to display in their surgeries advising patients about self-care this winter. GP practices in Wales will receive a second copy of both

posters in Welsh. I will be writing to you with more information about the BMA's new winter resources in my next update.

GP contract

For up-to-date details on the GP contract changes for 2014-2015, see bma.org.uk/gpcontract

With best wishes
Chaand Nagpaul

6 December 2013

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