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GPC meeting

The GPC met on 19 November 2009 and this newsletter provides a summary of the main items discussed.

Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body evidence

Since the last GPC meeting, we have submitted supplementary evidence to the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body (DDRDB) evidence. Although GPC and NHSE had hoped to submit joint evidence on how any uplift could be applied, GPC negotiators decided that they could only agree to a differential uplift if no practice would lose out in real terms. In the current economic climate, where any DDRB award is likely to be small, a ratio approach like that used this year would damage some practices while taking very few off MPIG. We did offer to negotiate a differential distribution of any award over and above that required to meet practice expenses, but the health departments declined this offer. Consequently, the GPC, NHS Employers and the health departments have submitted separate supplementary evidence to the DDRB.

Negotiations

The GPC's negotiations with NHS Employers for 2010/11 have now almost concluded. There will be minimal change in 2010/11 to help the profession cope with flu-related workload. Details will follow as soon as we receive written confirmation of the agreement.

Pandemic flu update

Although the current pandemic seems to be less severe than once feared, we continue our discussions with NHS Employers and the Department of Health about service continuity and coordination during a pandemic and to finalise the emergency SFE.

We are in the final stages of agreeing the emergency SFE (eSFE) with the NHSE and DH, as well as nearing publication of the joint BMA/RCP/DH flu guidance for GP practices.

Any announcements and updates will be posted on the [pandemic flu pages for GPs](#).

Second phase of H1N1 vaccinations

Yesterday it was announced that healthy children aged from 6 months up to 5 years (around 2.7 million) are to be included in the second phase of H1N1 vaccinations. This is due to an increase in GP consultation rates amongst school-aged children after half term, and a substantial increase in the number of under 5s in hospital, including in critical care. The CMO also announced that carers (1.5 to 5 million) are to be added to the group of front line health and social care workers to be prioritised for vaccination in the second phase.

The NHSE has indicated that it wishes to discuss the vaccination arrangements for the under 5s with the GPC. However, formal negotiations have not begun and there are not yet any arrangements in place for how the work will be organised or recognised.

There have been suggestions that phase one is expected to be concluded by mid December, but the GPC has stressed to the DH that it is more likely that the first phase will conclude in mid January, after which time the second phase can commence. Until the first phase is finished, vaccination of the healthy under 5s should not begin.

Vaccinations by midwives

Following anecdotal reports from across England that midwives have not been administering the H1N1 vaccine to pregnant women and also advising pregnant women against obtaining vaccination, the GPC has raised its concerns with Ian Dalton (National Director of Pandemic Influenza) and Lindsey Davies (National Director of Pandemic Influenza Preparedness).

The GPC is urging the Chief Nursing Officer to issue guidance urgently to be cascaded to all midwives, emphasising the extreme importance of H1N1 vaccination for this priority group and allaying fears about giving the vaccine to pregnant women and the effect on them and their babies.

Vaccination by occupational health

We have also raised with Ian Dalton concerns about reports that some occupational health departments are not vaccinating pregnant NHS staff and some are failing to inform the GP with whom the staff are registered that they have been vaccinated.

Vaccination supply

Reports are continuing to be received that some practices still have not received the H1N1 flu vaccines and that there are delays in getting further batches for larger practices. Vaccine supply is not coming as fast as hoped because of the vaccines not being produced and sent as quickly as expected, but the DH is hopeful that this will be quickly resolved. The GPC has urged the DH to reflect the current state of affairs more accurately in their announcements.

The DH has published a [Swine flu vaccine delivery and distribution FAQ](#).

Sharing batches of vaccine

The possibility of sharing batches of vaccine, in particular the Baxter Vaccine for egg allergies, has been discussed with the NHSE and the DH. The GPC suggested that as generally the number of patients in each practice with egg allergies will be relatively low, it might be helpful if 'buddy' practices shared a batch of the Baxter vaccine so as not to waste it, and the DH agreed to look in to this.

The issue of repackaging packs of vaccine for inward distribution is also mentioned in [CMO's letter](#) (15 October).

NHS Choices - England only

Laurence Buckman met with officials from [NHS Choices](#) this week and they provided him with an update on progress with the website since patients have been able to post comments and rate practices.

As of 13 November there were:

- 3060 live comments
- 560 rejected comments
- 77 'alerts' requesting comments be removed
- 131 practice replies

Only a small number of practices in receipt of comments have taken the time to respond to comments so far. Those practices with comments are advised to read and consider responding; NHS Choices automatically notifies practices when comments have been posted. It is important to remember that the website is a public one and any comments which are, for example, factually incorrect will leave a false impression if there is no response from the practice concerned.

Please note also our previous advice that practices regularly check their profiles regarding the accuracy of information about opening hours, staff details and services available to patients.

Practices that do not currently edit their own data on NHS Choices can do so by obtaining a login/password from the dedicated GP help desk on 0845 402 3089.

Locum GP pension contributions

In order for locum GPs' pension contributions to count towards the NHS pension, they should be paid within 10 weeks of the corresponding work being completed. It has been brought to our attention that some practices may not have been paying locum GPs within this 10 week period for work carried out in their practice, leading to locum GPs missing the contribution deadline.

On looking into how this would affect locum GPs' pension contributions, although some PCOs are more strict on this than others, a PCO certainly can decide not to pension contributions sent outside of the 10 week limit. Although it is our view that locum GPs would not be forced to opt out of the NHS pension scheme as a whole in this circumstance, they would lose out on pension benefits for that specific piece of work.

It is therefore important that practices pay locum GPs within this timeframe, and preferably much earlier than this.

Revalidation

The RCGP has recently published the first version of its guide to the credit based system for continuing professional development. The main principle behind the system is to allow GPs to record their CPD based both on the time spent on the activity and the impact it has on patient care. Under the system, each recorded hour spent on a CPD activity counts as a credit, while additional credits can be earned by demonstrating the impact of the learning. The guide can be found on the [RCGP website](#). The GPC is looking into the proposals in the guide, and will be feeding back to the RCGP on this in due course.

Vicky Weeks, Chairman of the sessional GPs subcommittee, fed back to the committee on the various revalidation pilots that are happening around the country, including the RCGP pilot looking into revalidation for sessional GPs and GPs in small and remote practices.

The committee discussed how to take the LMC conference resolutions on revalidation forward in its relations with the RCGP, Department of Health, and other stakeholders.

Extended GP training

Sir John Tooke's report on Modernising Medical Careers (Aspiring to Excellence) recommended that training for general practice should be extended from three to five years. The Department of Health subsequently commissioned the RCGP to "carry out work as a feasibility study intended to establish the business case for extending training."

Steve Field, Chairman of the RCGP Council, gave a presentation to GPC members explaining the work that the RCGP had done on this business case. He confirmed that the RCGP intends to submit its report to the Department of Health in late December 2009.

Abolition of practice boundaries

As reported in last month's GPC News, the GPC is continuing to consider in detail the concept of the abolition of practice boundaries in order to be able to respond effectively should the Department of Health seek to pursue the proposal. In undertaking this work, the GPC is also looking at the perceived problems that the implementation of the proposal would seek to address.

Practice based commissioning

Given the forthcoming general election, the committee discussed the differing positions of the main political parties on the development of GP commissioning and how best to influence how those policies might evolve.

Out-of-hours care

Following some further work by the Commissioning and Service Development subcommittee, the Committee discussed possible steps on how to take forward the LMC conference resolution on there being a minimum set of criteria to govern the commissioning of out-of-hours care, to cover realistic minimum quality standards and minimum resource standards to provide safe and effective out-of-hours care. The GPC will be liaising with the RCGP on this.

Recent PCC ruling

On 29 October the Daily Mail published a letter co-signed by Laurence Buckman and fellow complainant, a GP from Surrey, following an investigation by the Press Complaints Commission into the paper's coverage of GP pay. It was in response to a specific article published in August which claimed some GPs were 'earning up to £380,000 a year' and being paid £200 an hour for work 'they used to do free'.

Making a claim that fulfils the PCC's criteria and therefore stands a chance of success is not easy and the organisation's powers are also fairly limited. However, on this occasion, we felt there was a reasonable case for us to take action. This was a positive outcome for us as the Daily Mail had chosen not to publish an initial letter we sent them immediately after the story appeared. Details of the resolution of the complaint, and the letter, have been published on the [PCC website](#).

LMC Conference 2010

LMC Conference 2010 will take place on Thursday 10 & Friday 11 June at Logan Hall, London. LMCs were emailed this week with details of the conference, the application form and the number of representatives per LMC, as well as evaluation feedback from the Chairman of Conference. These documents are [available on the BMA website](#).

LMC Secretaries Conference - 3 December

Thank you all for returning the forms indicating your workshop preferences. We look forward to seeing you at the Conference on 3 December.

Media coverage report

Please find attached (appendix 1) 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 2. 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 3.

Royal Medical Benevolent Fund

Please find attached (appendix 4) details of the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund Christmas appeal.

The GPC next meets on 17 December 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 8 December 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](#).

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