

**To: GP Practices
Chief Executives of Primary Care Trusts**

29 October 2007

Dear Colleague

GP Patient Survey – Your Doctor, Your Experience, Your Say

This letter confirms arrangements for delivery of the 2008 GP Patient Survey. The survey measures GP practices' performance against the standards set out in the "Improved Access Scheme" and "Choice and Booking" Directed Enhanced Services (DESs). Survey results trigger reward payments to practices signed up to the DESs.

GP practices who are signed up to either or both DESs and who intend to take part in the survey need to take no immediate action (other than read the attachments which describe this year's survey arrangements). GP practices who have not already signed up to either or both DESs are encouraged to take the opportunity to do so immediately by contacting their PCT. Practices are reminded that by signing up to the DESs they agree to facilitate the delivery of the survey.

GP practices that do not wish to take part in the survey and therefore intend to opt out of the appropriate DESs need to alert the Department by emailing the GPPS mailbox at GPPatientSurvey@dh.gsi.gov.uk by November 30th. Ipsos MORI, the survey provider, will then be instructed not to conduct a survey for these practices. Please entitle your e-mail '**Practice opt out 2007/08.**' Include in your response DES opt out details (e.g. Access, Choice, Both), practice code and a contact name. GP practices who have no intention of taking part in the DESs should also opt out as the survey will be conducted for any and all practices who do not opt out.

By opting out of the survey, GP practices are advised they will not be entitled to payments under the DESs that are dependent on survey results. Any aspiration payments made may also be clawed back. GP practices are therefore advised to discuss the implications of any decision to opt out of the survey with their PCT prior to confirming their decision with the Department. The Department will be unable to reinstate any GP practice into the survey following the receipt of an opt-out notice.

Thank you for your help and co-operation.

Yours sincerely,



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GP Patient Survey: Summary of arrangements for 2007/2008

The Survey

1. In many ways, the GP Patient Survey this year is unchanged from last year's arrangements:
 - It is being delivered by Ipsos MORI, a specialist survey organisation.
 - Almost 5 million questionnaires will be sent to selected patients from 7 January 2008 with a deadline of 2 April 2008 for responses.
 - Patients will again be asked about:
 - (i) contacting the practice by telephone;
 - (ii) consulting a GP within two working days;
 - (iii) booking appointments ahead;
 - (iv) seeing a preferred GP;
 - (v) practice opening hours; and,
 - (vi) recalling a discussion about choice following a referral.
 - Separate questionnaires will be issued to support the Access DES and the Choice and Booking DES, with GP practices again issuing the separate Choice questionnaire directly to eligible patients.
 - PCTs will be notified of the survey results in May so that reward payments can be made to qualifying practices in the first quarter of the 2008/09 financial year.
 - Detailed survey results are planned for publication in June 2008 and will again support PCTs to target action locally to improve access to services.

Extracting Patients Details

2. Survey recipients' details, the "sample data" (Patients' NHS Number, Full Name and Address, date of birth and gender) will be obtained for all practices participating in the Access DES using registered patient lists held and managed by PCTs under the NHAIS (Exeter) registration system. A random selection of eligible patients will be drawn for each practice.
3. Apollo Medical Systems software is **not** being used this year to support the extraction of sample data. GP practices do not therefore need to take any further action if they want to participate in the Access Survey, other than signing up to the DES with the PCT.
4. No such sample data is needed in support of the Choice and Booking DES as GP practices are again responsible for issuing Choice questionnaires directly from the practice to relevant choice referral patients. The Choice Survey period will begin on 21st January 2008 and will run for 10 weeks. In addition to handing out the questionnaire to patients attending the practice who have just been the subject of a

choice referral, practices will also have the option this year of issuing the questionnaire to patients who have been the subject of a prior choice referral. This means patients with the Choice Read Code included in their patient notes from 1 September 2007 may receive a questionnaire e.g. either handed out at the practice following a routine appointment or mailed locally.

5. Administration payments will again be made to practices to support the issue of Choice questionnaires by practices, as last year.

Data Protection Act

6. To ensure that survey data is processed lawfully, it is necessary under the Data Protection Act 1998 for the Department of Health to have an appropriate data sharing agreement in place with Ipsos MORI.
7. The sample databases produced through the NHAIS extraction process described previously will be transferred to Ipsos MORI, the appointed data processor for the Department of Health. Ipsos MORI will process the data by using the patient name and address to send questionnaires to selected patients and will process the subsequent responses.
8. The Department of Health is the Data Controller for the patient details used for the survey. Whilst the Department of Health will not hold or process any patient identifiable information resulting from this data processing, the Department controls the manner and purpose of the processing being carried out on its behalf by Ipsos MORI.
9. The data sharing statement will be available on the Department's website shortly and this replaces last year's arrangement where each individual NHAIS key user, on behalf of individual PCTs, put in place an agreement with Ipsos MORI.

Patient Opt Outs

10. Completing the survey is voluntary. If patients do not wish to take part they do not need to return their questionnaire. However, if there are patients who do not wish to receive a questionnaire through the post, practices should email their **names and NHS numbers** to the DH mailbox at GPPatientSurvey@dh.gsi.gov.uk by November 30th. Please entitle the email '**Patient opt out 2007/08**'.

Further information

11. The 'Primary Medical Care Contracting' part of the Department of Health website includes the legal directions governing the DES schemes as well as dedicated GP Patient Survey sections that cover both 2006/07 and 2007/08 surveys. Further information (guidance, updates, frequently asked questions etc) will be placed on these pages in preparation for the delivery of the 2007/08 Survey. The next planned guidance on the survey is to be issued in November which will provide further detail of the arrangements described here.

12. Information will also be available through the 'Primary Care Contracting' website where there is a dedicated helpdesk support for the survey. However, it should be remembered that the helpdesk is for SHA and PCT enquiries only. Individual practices should contact their PCT in the first instance, as any individual practice queries to the PCC mailbox may not be answered.
 13. Posters for practice waiting areas will be mailed to practices by Ipsos MORI in November, along with an information leaflet for practice staff.
- Link to Primary Care Contracting Website: www.primarycarecontracting.nhs.uk
 - SHAs and PCTs should direct questions to the Primary Care Contracting (PCC) Helpdesk: gppatientsurvey@pcc.nhs.uk
 - Link to Department of Health website: www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/OrganisationPolicy/PrimaryCare/PrimaryCareContracting/fs/en
 - GP practices and public enquires can be e-mailed to the DH Mailbox. However they are reminded that they should contact their PCTs in the first instance: GPPatientSurvey@dh.gsi.gov.uk
 - The survey website for patients is provided by Ipsos MORI: www.gp-patient.co.uk

Questions & Answers

Q. Why isn't the Apollo Medical System software available this year to extract patients' details?

A. The Department had intended to make available Apollo software this year. The software was developed and ready to support the delivery of a single questionnaire covering both Access and Choice DES questions. That was to deliver a more efficient survey by removing the need for two questionnaires and minimising practice workload by removing the need to hand out Choice questionnaires. However, the Patient Information Advisory Group (PIAG) felt unable to support the planned approach because of concerns that an appointment or referral may have been used to select Survey recipients.

Q. What is PIAG?

A. The Patient Information Advisory Group was established to provide advice on issues of national significance involving the use of patient information and to oversee arrangements created under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 that permit the use of confidential patient information where patient consent cannot be obtained. Its membership is drawn from patient groups, healthcare professionals and regulatory bodies.

Q. Why does PIAG object to selecting patients using Apollo ?

A. The Advisory Group's judgement was that the benefits to the public of conducting the Survey did not, in their view, outweigh their concerns over the use of confidential information on the scale of the Survey without prior patient consent. The concern being potential risk to individuals receiving a Survey letter linking to a recent appointment or referral.

Q. Does this mean the Survey this year breaches patient confidentiality?

A. No not at all. The NHAIS (Exeter) registration system selects patients at random from practices' registered lists without reference to appointment or referral information so there are no such concerns over confidentiality and practices will hand out the Choice questionnaire directly to relevant choice referral patients. This is the Advisory Group's preferred solution for this year.

Q What is the NHAIS (Exeter) system?

A. NHAIS (National Health Applications and Infrastructure Services) (Exeter) is a software suite used by all local health organisations in England and Wales.

Q. What about last year's Access Survey, did that breach patient confidentiality?

A. No. Last year, the Department's Caldicott Guardian was content that arrangements put in place to conduct the Access Survey were sufficient to address the needs of the Data Protection Act 1998. That saw required data processing agreements put in place between all relevant parties.

Q. What was the GPC's view on the use of a methodology that relied on selecting patients on the basis of a recent appointment or referral?

A. The GPC worked with the Department and other stakeholders to develop the methodology and was prepared to support the Apollo approach, subject to the Advisory Group's approval.

Q. Why can't the Survey be delivered in one single exercise?

A. The NHAIS (Exeter) registration system is unable to target patients to take part in the Survey in the same way as the Apollo software i.e. it extracts Survey recipients randomly from registered lists. For Choice DES questions, this would mean payments to practices would rely on patients to self- identify themselves as having had a referral that was relevant for Choice. It was therefore decided that last year's direct issue to patients from GP practices should be repeated.

Q. In August, GP Practices were advised to use Read Codes to record choice referral patients. What will happen now?

A. The Read Codes introduced for recording Choice referrals from 1 September 2007 can still be used. Practices can use them to identify eligible patients to whom they may want to issue the Choice questionnaire during the Survey period. The relevant codes are:

- **9kK..** Choice and Booking - enhanced services administration (4 byte and version 2)
- **XaMJa** Choice and Booking - enhanced services administration (version 3)
- **222711000000102** Choice and Booking - enhanced services (SNOMED)

Q. How will practices receive their Choice questionnaires?

A. The questionnaire packs will be delivered directly from Ipsos MORI to GP practices in January 2008. Practice staff will be asked to sign for the packs. There will be a reimbursement payment to practices for handing out the questionnaires as per last year's criteria.

Q. Are both components of the Choice and Booking DES (i.e Choice and Choose and Book) being measured through the Choice questionnaire?

A. No. The purpose of the questionnaire is to generate data to inform payment of the Choice component of the Choice and Booking DES. The Choose and Book element of the DES is being measured through a separate monthly report generated by the Choose and

Book system. Practice Choose and Book utilisation data will automatically be generated by this report. Practices wishing to take part in the Choose and Book element of the DES should inform their PCT.

Q. Will display materials be available for practice waiting areas?

A. Posters and leaflets (for practice staff) will be mailed to practices from Ipsos MORI in November. Non-participating practices that receive this material should disregard it.

Q. When will further guidance be available?

A. Further guidance is scheduled for November and will be available on the Primary Care section of the Department's website.