

GP Trainees subcommittee e-bulletin, December 2007

Welcome to the second issue of the 2007-2008 e-bulletin of the GP Trainees subcommittee of the GPC. The aim of this e-bulletin is to keep you up to date with the major issues being faced by GP trainees and the current work of the subcommittee.

Annual leave entitlement

The GP Trainees subcommittee has confirmed with the Committee of General Practice Education Directors (COGPED) that, in line with hospital doctors' terms and conditions of service, GP Specialty Registrars, on the third incremental point or higher of their scale (NB this is not the same as ST3, and means those on STR point 03 or above), are entitled to an additional five days annual leave, and should therefore see their contracts amended accordingly to an allowance of 30 days annual leave per annum.

As extra leave entitlements would fall within the PMETB's training restrictions whereby trainees are allowed no more than two weeks leave per annum in addition to normal leave allowance without the need for an extension to training, eligible GP Specialty Registrars would not be required to extend their training.

The entitlement for those GPStRs on the minimum, first or second incremental point of their payscale will remain at 25 days per annum.

The Framework for a written contract of employment has been updated in line with this, and is available on the BMA website: www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/framecontractGPregs0707

GP Trainers are asked to amend the contracts of their current GPStRs accordingly, and we understand that COGPED will also communicate this to all Deaneries shortly.

The subcommittee would like to remind all Trainers and GPs in training that it is good practice to sign contracts of employment for any forthcoming placements at an early stage and that the BMA offers a contract checking service to members. www.bma.org.uk/askbma

Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body and GPStR supplement

The DDRB is an independent body whose role is to make recommendations to the Government on the remuneration of doctors and dentists taking part in the NHS. On making its recommendations the DDRB must consider many aspects as put forward in evidence by the Department of Health (DH), NHS Employers (NHSE) and member bodies such as the BMA.

The DDRB have now received all the evidence from the BMA, NHSE and the DH, for 2008-09, and are expected to announce their recommendations towards the end of February 2008. The BMA's evidence in respect of GP Specialty Registrars focused on increased living, training and certification costs, and requested an appropriate uplift to basic pay, whilst maintaining the supplement at its current level of 55%. The evidence from both the DH and NHS Employers called for a reduction in supplement to 50%, which the BMA has argued strongly against.

The Chairman of the GP Trainees subcommittee, Dr Alex Smallwood, attended the DDRB oral evidence session on 3 December, and had chance to answer further questions in relation to the evidence submitted.

The BMA's evidence is available, in full, at: www.bma.org.uk
The NHSE's evidence is available at:
www.nhsemployers.org/pay-conditions/pay-conditions-3077.cfm

The Department's evidence is available at:
www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_080117

Further information on the remit of the DDRB is available at:
www.ome.uk.com/review.cfm?body=5

November pay uplift

The Direction to Strategic Health Authorities Concerning GP Registrars were amended with effect from 1 November 2007 to uplift the payscales in accordance with the remainder of the £650 DDRB staged uplift in 2007. These uplifted payscales are available on the DH website here:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsLegislation/DH_079915

nMRCGP costs

Dr Alex Smallwood, Chairman, and Dr Katie Bramall, Deputy Chairman of the subcommittee, recently met with Dr Colin Hunter, RCGP Treasurer, and Dr Ruth Palmer, RCGP Director of Professional Development and Standards, to discuss subcommittee concerns in relation to the exam fees set by the RCGP for the new exam. Discussion was had around the cost breakdown of the individual components of the exam. It was clarified that the college had approached this with a neutral costings principle and that for the first year this had necessarily been based on an estimated number of candidates. Depending on how accurate these predictions were, this could result in a deficit or profit to the college, which would be adjusted as appropriate, and accordingly in line with the neutral cost principle, and any year on year inflation.

AKT

The subcommittee sought clarification from the college following reports that a small number of GPStRs had experienced computer failures during their AKT exams. The RCGP have reassured us that the matter had been fully investigated and steps taken to safeguard the exams of future AKT candidates. Those affected will be allowed to resit the exams free of charge, and will not experience any detrimental impact to their training as a result of this.

Another issue regarding the AKT exams arose as a result of clashes between deadlines for applications for sitting assessments, and the publication of results from earlier sittings. The subcommittee notified the RCGP of the problem and raised concerns that that this would affect GPStRs who had failed their first attempt at the AKT, but been notified too late to be able to retake in the next planned sitting. The RCGP have since changed their policy enabling those GPStRs on the old MRCGP and therefore requiring their AKT to be able to sit the January 2008 sitting.

Information regarding the nMRCGP exams and fees are available from the RCGP website at: www.rcgp.org.uk

The subcommittee will of course remain in close contact with the college, and the newly formed RCGP Associates in Training (AiT) committee, on this and other issues relating to GP training.

PMETB

The PMETB has launched a new consultation looking at proposed certification fee increases for doctors applying for a Certificate of Eligibility to the Specialist Register (CESR) or Certificate of Eligibility to the General Register (CEGPR) equivalence routes. Most doctors who successfully complete postgraduate training are awarded a Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) and these fees will rise from £750 to £770. However, the consultation focuses on the equivalence routes which are undertaken by doctors who may not have followed a traditional training programme, but who have achieved the same level of competencies and skills as CCT holders. The PMETB proposes that these fees will increase from £1250 to £1850.

The BMA is naturally very concerned by the proposal to increase fees and the GP Trainees subcommittee is leading on the joint craft BMA response to the consultation. The deadline for submission of responses to the consultation is 30 January 2008. Following the outcome of the consultation any proposed fee increases will come into effect from 1 April 2008. Further Information regarding the PMETB consultation can be found at: www.pmetb.org.uk/

We would like to remind all GPStRs to apply for their certificates, whether CCT or Article 11 (CEGPR), as early as possible to avoid delays at the end of training.

GP Trainees handbook

Work on the new GP trainees handbook is now underway, and it is hoped that this will be completed in time for August 2008. It is intended that this will be a web-based tool providing information throughout GP training available as a benefit of BMA membership, with a smaller pamphlet summary version available for all GPStRs in training.

Representation

The subcommittee is aware that there is much variation throughout the UK when it comes to GP training and our regional representatives are there to support trainees in their regional areas and bring 'hot topics' to the subcommittee for discussion and any necessary action.

As a result many regions have set up their own regional Trainees committees to act as discussion forums for local trainees, and are hugely important to our work. If you would like to get involved please contact your regional representative and find out what's going on in your area. Contact details for your local representative are available on the BMA website here:

www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/gpregmembers0902?OpenDocument&Login or please email Victoria White (vwhite@bma.org.uk) who will be able to put you in touch.

MTAS/MMC

The BMA recently submitted it's response to the Tooke Report 'Aspiring to Excellence', which included input from the GP trainees subcommittee. The final response supported a move to a five year training programme for general practice, with a strong caveat that such an extension to training must be general practice orientated with a focus on the GP curriculum throughout, and relevant to a future GP's career.

To read the Tooke report please visit: www.mmcinquiry.org.uk/draft.htm

GPs to be conference

Following the huge success of the July 2007 GPs to be conference held in Solihull, the BMA will once again be organising a conference with the RCGP, to be held 21-22 July 2008, for all those in GP training. Following the completion of recent refurbishments and the availability of new conference facilities at BMA House the conference will be held in London.

Please keep an eye on the BMA's website for up-to-date information regarding speakers, their seminars and your chance to reserve your place. www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/HubBoPConferences

Subcommittee membership

Following the GPR summer newsletter the subcommittee are pleased to report that there is now almost a full quota of representatives, whilst vacancies still exist in the following regions: SE Scotland and N. Scotland, N.E. Scotland and E. Scotland. To ensure continuity on the subcommittee any eligible GP in training volunteering to act as representative in one of these regions would be allowed to fill the post until the end of the current session in July 2008.

Information regarding the work of the subcommittee and it's membership is available at: www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/gpregrep and if you would like to be involved in the work of the subcommittee, please contact Angela Button for further information, abutton@bma.org.uk

Endnote

We hope that you have found this edition of the GP Registrars e-bulletin interesting and helpful. Please do pass this e-bulletin on to anyone interested in GP Registrar issues, and if you would like to be added to our mailing list please email vwhite@bma.org.uk