

NEGOTIATORS' REPORT

April 2008

2005/06 Earnings and Expenses Inquiry

The Government Information Centre has released details of GP earnings for the year 05-06. Our press release and media comments focused on the fact that there has been no increase in resources for two years despite increased expenses. The GPC produced background information for LMCs and a factsheet for GPs to help explain the earnings figures to patients.

Population Health Screening

On 1 April the government announced that a national screening programme to identify vulnerability to vascular diseases will be offered for everyone aged between 40 – 74. The GPC was not consulted in advance of release of the information to the media and a letter is being sent to Alan Johnson to express some reservations about the evidence base for the measures, and concerns that excessive pressure will be put on an already overstretched general practice, both in terms of workforce, premises and other resources. This will also draw attention to the work already taking place in practices through the QOF to record the blood pressure of patients aged 45 and over and other opportunistic screening. The GPC has advised that it is happy to discuss how evidence-based, appropriately resourced, and clinically effective screening could operate in primary care, in addition to the valuable work already undertaken by practices to check vascular risk factors for at risk patients. The Chairman has had a meeting with the English Departmental team that are taking this work forwards and further meetings are planned.

Public Accounts Committee Inquiry

The GPC produced a factsheet to clarify why and how the GP contract was introduced and the benefits to patient care it has delivered. This was in response to The National Audit Office's (NAO) recent report *NHS Pay Modernisation: New Contracts for General Practice Services in England*, a report on the GP contracts in England, and was also submitted as evidence to the Public Accounts Committee Inquiry 'Pay Modernisation in this NHS - GP contracts' which took place on 26 March 2008. This factsheet "The value of general practice" is available on the BMA website. Although the GPC was not permitted to give oral evidence at the enquiry, a number of GPC members and LMC representatives took the opportunity to brief their local MPs, who were members of the Inquiry, and this was much appreciated.

Motor Vehicle Allowance - Guidance for GP specialty registrars

The Schedules to Direction to Strategic Health Authorities concerning GP Registrars (2003) were amended 31 July 2007 to alter the provision for reimbursement for the business use of a private vehicle for GP Specialty Registrars (GPStR) in England. The full Schedule to the Direction is available on the NHSE website here - www.nhsemployers.org/pay-conditions/pay-conditions-469.cfm

The GPC has issued guidance for GP registrars on the new arrangements for payment of the Motor Vehicle Allowance in England. The guidance is available for BMA members at the following link – [www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/PDFGPregsMVA0408/\\$FILE/MVAApril2008.pdf?Open&login](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/PDFGPregsMVA0408/$FILE/MVAApril2008.pdf?Open&login)

Pending amendment to the relevant statutory legislation, GPStRs in Scotland and Wales should still be receiving the previous allowance. We are aware, and remain concerned, that GPStRs in Northern Ireland are at present not receiving either the old or the new allowance for reimbursement for the business use of their vehicles. Discussions in relation to this are ongoing between the BMA and the Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency (NIMDTA), and the GPC will continue to push for resolution to this issue.

Pharmacy White Paper

The Pharmacy White Paper was published on 3 April. Although predominantly relating to community pharmacy, it does have a section devoted to dispensing GPs. The precursor to the White Paper was a review of the "control of entry" regulations undertaken last year by Anne Galbraith, former Chair of the Prescription Pricing Authority. The GPC submitted detailed written evidence and oral evidence to Anne Galbraith and her committee and have been awaiting the White Paper since.

The contents of the chapter on dispensing doctors (Chapter 8) does, on first reading, look intimidating but the chapter concludes with a section in bold text:

"... the Government proposes that any changes to dispensing doctor market entry arrangements should be part of a **wider consultation on elements of the "control of entry" system** itself, as proposed here (in the White Paper). The consultation will also consider whether current regulatory arrangements can be streamlined so that dispensing consent in future is sought under a single regulatory route".

The negotiators have worked very closely with the DH and NHS Employers on dispensing doctor issues for the very many years and will strongly defend the rights of dispensing GPs. The consultation is unlikely to begin until after the final Darzi report as the two are supposed to be closely aligned. It is impossible to know at this stage what, if anything, will emerge from this White Paper. Any legislation is unlikely to be before Parliament before next year.

Full details of the White Paper are available at the following link - www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_083815