

Press and Parliamentary and Public Information Report for April GPC 2008

Perhaps surprisingly in view of previous performance, there was hardly any media interest at all in GP pay figures for 05-06 when they were published. It would be premature to think the press has lost interest in how much GPs earn, but we will have to see if there is a trend. The topic of extended hours for general practice does interest journalists although it was clear from inquiries to press office that reporters believed everything would change on 1 April.

Press Releases March 2008 – April 2008

19/3/08	Pay figures overtaken by two-year freeze, says GP leader
28/3/08	New GPC guidance on QOF changes
1/4/08	Screening programme could lead to the healthy being seen at the expense of the sick, say GPs
3/4/08	GPs' leader comments on extended role for pharmacists
3/4/08	Joint Statement from NHS Employers and GPC :Changes to the national GP contract
8/4/08	Explaining the extended hours DES – guidance and concerns from the BMA
10/4/08	BMA welcomes government's decision not to appeal GP pension ruling

GPC Media Coverage Report

BMA mentions in national press / TV & Radio

March 2008

	National	Regional	Total
Print:	32		
Broadcasts:	15		

SUBJECT	National broadcast	National print
NAO report / GP contract	3	1
Patient choice / voucher system	1	-
GP poll	7	-
GP surgeries and use of private sector	1	3
Patient records / confidentiality	1	-
Hospital car parking charges	2	-
GP prescribing patterns	-	1
Smoking and advertising	-	1
GP pay	-	1
Sick / well notes	-	5
GP out-of-hours and extended opening times	-	14
Pensions / judicial review	-	3
Surgery telephone numbers	-	1
Polyclinics	-	1
NHS Direct	-	1
TOTAL	15	32

BMA spokespeople	Broadcast	Print

Laurence Buckman	4	10
Chaand Nagpaul	4	-
Richard Vautrey	3	2
Helena McKeown	1	-
Paul Cundy	1	-
Tony Calland	2	-
Bill Beeby	2	-
Hamish Meldrum	-	5
Peter Holden	-	1
BMA mention	-	1
TOTAL		

BROADCASTS

Thursday, 28 February 2008

NAO report / GP contract

Dr Chaand Nagpaul:

- GMTV
- BBC1 Breakfast News
- BBC 1 '6 o'clock news'

Monday, 31 March 2008

Patient choice / voucher system

Dr Laurence Buckman

- Sky News

Thursday, 6 March 2008

GP Poll

Dr Laurence Buckman

- Sky News
- BBC Radio 5 Live 'Simon Mayo'
- PA Multimedia

Dr Richard Vautrey

- IRN
- BBC News 24
- BBC Radio 4 'Six o'clock news'

Dr Chand Nagpaul

- BBC Radio 5 Live 'Five Live Drive'

GP surgeries and private providers

Dr Helena McKeown

- ITV Meridian

Monday, 3 March 2008

Patient records/confidentiality

Dr Paul Cundy

- BBC Radio 4 'Today programme'

Car park charges

Dr Tony Calland

- BBC Radio 4 'Today programme'
- BBC 1 'Breakfast News'

NATIONAL PRESS CUTTINGS

31/03

- Financial Times P.4 – GPs face release of data on prescribing (quote by Bill Beeby)

25/03

- Daily Mail P.10 – Curb on cigarette displays ‘will glamorise smoking’ (quote by Richard Vautrey)

20/03

- Daily Telegraph P.12 – GPs earn £110,000 despite ‘pay freeze’ (quote by Laurence Buckman)

19/03

- The Guardian P.10 – Sick of being stereotyped (sicknotes)

18/03

- Daily Mail P.8 – Fitnotes plea
- Daily Express P.6 – The £100bn-a-year cost of Brown’s sick-note Britain (quote by Hamish Meldrum)
- Financial Times P.8 – ‘Fit note’ plan to stem incapacity benefit flow (quote by Hamish Meldrum)
- Daily Telegraph P.10 – Doctors ‘need more funds’ to get the sick back to work (quote by Hamish Meldrum)

17/03

- The Guardian P.15 – ‘One in three’ GPs willing to restore 24-hour care

16/03

- The Independent on Sunday P.23 – GPs’ leaders warn against ‘privatisation by stealth’ (quote by Laurence Buckman)

14/03

- Financial Times P.4 – GPs win legal fight over pensions cap (quote by Hamish Meldrum)

13/03

- Daily Mail P.33 – GPs take ministers to court (quote by Hamish Meldrum)
- Daily Telegraph P.14 – Pension challenge

11/03

- Daily Mail P.57 – Dial-a-GP blunder cost this girl her life (quote by Laurence Buckman)
- The Times P.2 – The Top Stories (GPs have reluctantly accepted government plans to extend surgery opening hours)

08/03

- Daily Mail P.10 – 40p a minute to phone your doctor (quote by Richard Vautrey)

07/03

- Financial Times P.2 – NHS buyback deal could cost £187m (quote by Laurence Buckman)
- Daily Telegraph P.14 – 97pc of GPs do not trust Labour with NHS
- The Guardian P.7 – Angry GPs reluctantly accept plan for weekend and evening surgeries (quote by Laurence Buckman)
- The Independent P.10 – GPs agree to longer hours after government ‘threats’
- The Times P.26 – Grudging GPs give in and agree to open evenings and weekends (quote by Laurence Buckman)
- Daily Mail P.2 – GPs to work more or take a pay cut (quote by Laurence Buckman)
- Daily Express P.2 – GPs angry at extra hours
- Daily Mirror P.27 – Unhappy GPs back down on out-of-hours work
- Metro P. 4 – Angry GPs agree to longer hours

06/03

- Evening Standard P.1 & 2 – GPs to open after office hours (quote by Laurence Buckman)
- Daily Telegraph P.1 – Unhappy GPs will extend surgery hours (quote by Laurence Buckman)

05/03

- The Guardian P.8 – Johnson seeks to end surgery hours dispute

04/03

- The Times P.4 – The party’s over for GPs (quote by Peter Holden)

01/03

- The Times P.3 – Well, Well... "GP productivity should be measured in improvements in health, not frequency of consultations" (quote by Laurence Buckman)
- Daily Telegraph P.14 – Each call to 'ineffective' NHS Direct costs £16
- Financial Times P.8 – The real agenda? It's a sell-off

Parliamentary Unit report, Westminster

- In early April, the Parliamentary Unit responded to concerns from Dr. Andrew Murrison, Conservative MP for Westbury, about how the Government was using data from the 2007 Patient Experience Survey to justify its case for extended hours.
- The Public Accounts Committee held an evidence session on 'Pay modernisation in the NHS- GP contract' on Wednesday 26th March 2008. The Committee heard evidence from:
 - David Nicholson, Chief Executive of the NHS,
 - Dr. David Colin-Thome, National Clinical Director for Primary Care
 - Mark Britnell, Director General of Commissioning and System Management, DH

As expected, MPs were critical about pay, productivity, practice staff pay and MPIG. However, it is clear that where GPC reps had lobbied PAC MPs ahead of the evidence session, this made a real difference in the MPs' perception of local GPs (which was very positive) and the questions they asked during the evidence session; this underlines how important and valuable it is for doctors to engage with their constituency MPs. A full, uncorrected transcript of the evidence session can be viewed at the following website:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmpubacc.htm#uncorr>

- Richard Vautrey met with John Grogan MP, chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party's health committee on Thursday 20th March to discuss the future of general practice. By coincidence, the committee was addressed by Lord Darzi a few days later. With the MP's agreement, the Parliamentary Unit has put in a request for the GPC to address the committee.
- The Parliamentary Unit continues to brief politicians on the government's changes to medical regulation.

Supporting contact between GPs and MPs

In the next few months, the Parliamentary Unit will be stepping up its efforts to promote contact between GPs, LMCs and their constituency MPs. GPC reps who would like assistance in contacting with their MP should contact Susan Solanki, Parliamentary Liaison Officer at ssolanki@bma.org.uk.

Regional coverage

In the past month the BMA has been featured in 144 regional media interviews, 70 of them in print and 74 broadcasts. Of these the lion's share, 94 interviews, were on extended hours in GP practices. Polyclinics featured in eight interviews, with the remainder covering topics including GP pensions, patient choice, and supermarket surgeries.

Letters to Press from GPs include the following : March - April 2008

Date	Signatory	Publication	Subject of letter
27/3/08	Dr Laurence Buckman	HSJ	MPIG

GPC Communications Report Scotland

Press Releases:

1 April Patients deserve an NHS where care is led by consultants and GPs, says
BMA Scotland

7 April GP leader responds to DDRB announcement on doctors' pay awards

10 April Quality of doctors' training threatened by European hours limits, BMA surveys show (Scotland version)

Broadcast:

27 March

STV Scotland Today News

Dr George Fernie - Assisted Dying

8 April

BBC Reporting Scotland

Dr Stuart Scott HPV Vaccine

BBC Radio Scotland (News)

Dr Stuart Scott HPV Vaccine

Radio Forth/Clyde

Dr Stuart Scott HPV Vaccine

Letters/Features:

The Scotsman

'Trust me, I'm a doctor... please'. THIS month, I received a somewhat belated, anonymous Valentine card delivered to me at my surgery. Dr John Garner's monthly column

Letters:

The BMA Scotland press office produced a media toolkit to help LMCs generate media coverage on extended hours and to encourage individual GPs to write to the local and national press.

The Press Office also offered advice on draft letters and LMC news releases. This continues to generate local publicity for local doctors and letters pages of the national press.

Articles: (below is a selection of articles featuring interviews or comments with SGPC members)

18 March

The Herald p.7 - Doctors still unhappy on prescription for hours. When Dr David Bell and his colleagues at Scotstown Medical Centre in Aberdeen thought some patients might benefit from more flexible appointments, they decided to try some evening surgeries. (BMA Quote – Dr Dean Marshall plus comment from Drs Stuart Scott and David Bell)

Scottish Daily Express p.4 - GPs told: Dishing out antibiotics is spreading MRSA. Family doctors were warned yesterday to prescribe antibiotics only when necessary amid fears their widespread use is fuelling a rise in superbugs such as MRSA. (BMA Quote)

Scottish Daily Mail p.19 - MSPs back plans for forced quarantine. Patients suspected of carrying a deadly infectious disease could be forcibly quarantined, under proposals backed by MSPs last night. (BMA Quote)

21 March

The Herald p.1 Doctors' body admits surgeries 'may not be open long enough'.

CONCERN that doctors surgeries in parts of Scotland do not open for long enough hours has been raised by a leading medical body. BMA Quote - Dr Dean Marshall

23 March

Sunday Herald p.8 NHS to trial depression phonenumber.

SCOTLAND'S NHS helpline is to launch a unique new service which will offer patients suffering from depression treatment sessions over the phone. BMA Quote - Dr Andrew Buist

28 March

The Herald p.10 - Support for MSP's view on assisted suicide. Campaigners who want a change in the law to allow assistance for terminally ill people to end their lives yesterday welcomed the intervention of Independent MSP Margo MacDonald after she spoke at a Holyrood debate about her fight with Parkinson's disease. (BMA Quote - Dr George Fernie)

2 April

Scottish Daily Mail p.19

Councils are clueless on migrant numbers.

MORE than a third of Scotland's councils have no idea how many migrants are living in their area. BMA Quote - Dr Dean Marshall

6 April

Sunday Herald p.1 - SCOTLAND'S HEALTH WARNING. Scotland's dreadful reputation as the sick man of Europe is confirmed today with the publication of a major new study. (BMA Quote - Dr Stuart Scott)

8 April

Press & Journal p.8 - New pay deal gets an angry reception from practitioners. GPs have accused the Scottish Government of playing with statistics after it was announced that a new pay deal was to be implemented.

Public Information Unit report

FEEDBACK into 'SAVING YOUR SURGERY' inbox - from 25th Jan to 17th March 2008

In February, the Public Information Unit produced an interim paper on public responses to our 'savingyoursurgery' newsletter, which found patients to be in support of the BMA's letter and its content in a 2:1 majority.

The types of positive and negative patient comments we quoted in our interim report are, generally, representative of the comments which we have had since then, remaining approximately 2:1 in support of the BMA and leaving GP surgeries services as they are now. Typical positive comments were reported in a recent edition of BMA News (1st March).

We received 164 replies in all.

Below is a more quantitative assessment of the 150 replies we have had from patients, highlighting key themes from the emails and scoring particular issues which patients felt strongly enough about to mention on directly. Many emails just said 'we support the BMA', without mentioning specific issues, hence the lower scores for individual issues/concerns than overall scores.

The detailed numerical feedback relates to the number of positive/negative points raised rather than to the number of individual responses eg one email might express concern about both Saturday surgeries and GP salaries (counted separately), while another might be supportive overall and specifically mention being against polyclinics (also counted separately). This was done to capture as much information as possible from the feedback.

Overall, however, the emails were generally, rated as 'positive', 'negative' or 'mixed' (see the top row of the Table below). Opinions were usually quite clear cut either way.

A. Comments from patients

PATIENTS	Supportive of BMA and content of letter	Critical of letter and content	Mixed support or simply asking questions	TOTAL
	(No of patients)	(No of patients)	(No of Patients)	
	92 (61.3%)	44 (29.3%)	14 (9.3%)	150
Polyclinics/privatisation	Expressed specific concerns about polyclinics 16	Expressed support for polyclinics 5		
Extended hours	Not wanting extended hours 25	Wanting extended hours 25		
Saturday surgeries		Wanting Saturday surgeries – specific mentions 15		
Difficulties getting appointments	Specifically mentioned no difficulties 6	Specifically mentioned difficulties 10		
Difficulty getting to surgery		2		
Delegation of care to other healthcare professionals		1		
Out-of-hours		Specific concerns about OOH 2		
GP Pay	Number specifically supporting GP pay 1	Number specifically critical of GP pay in some way 17		
Surgery not open on certain days of week		Number who expressed concern about surgery not being open on certain days of week 6		
Specific comments on Posters	2	1		

Home visits		Number who specifically mentioned difficulty in obtaining a home visit		
		1		

Particular comments from patients (included in above statistics)

These points were also raised by patients:

- Questioning accuracy of newsletter eg why does extended hours mean less appointments? (3 responses)
- Newsletter patronising/dishonest etc (3 responses)
- Believed private canvassing of patients by BMA inappropriate (1 response)
- Particular problem expressed with pre-booking appointments (3 responses)
- Wanted either extended hours or advanced booking (1 comment)
- Patients wanting contact details for PCT – to write to in support of BMA (2 responses)
- Wanted template to write to MP (1 response)
- Leaflet wasted paper (should be printed on one sheet, not stapled)!! (1 response)

B. Comments from doctors/health professionals/ practice managers/others

We received 14 emails from the above group:

The key points are summarised below:

- One doctor said patients need to be able to access surgery during working hours – employers need to realise this
- Letter from Dr Goyal, Leeds, urging BMA to do more – forwarded to GPC
- Positive comment about newsletter from GP trainer
- Positive comment from GP registrar
- Need Scottish version of leaflet (from Scottish practice)
- Gloria Middleton (running own campaign to save surgeries) – v. positive
- Email from Helen Bate who has set up saveoursurgeries.co.uk
- One surgery wanted to adapt newsletter with local OOH details
- One practice wanted more detail about threats to general practice and less about pay/resources
- Practice Manager – horrified by bad press towards GPs
- One practice said letter did not photocopy well!
- One practice nurse suggested Saturday surgeries useful
- Nurse complaining about burden of extended hours falling disproportionately on nurses