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GPC meeting

The GPC met on 17 December 2009 and this newsletter provides a summary of the main items discussed.

Phase two vaccinations

GPC discussed the implications and outcomes of local negotiations for phase two of the H1N1 vaccinations. The GPC secretariat intends to survey LMCs in the New Year to gain a full picture of the outcome across the UK and we hope negotiations are going as well as possible..

Emergency (flu) SFE

GPC has worked with NHSE over several months to try to create an emergency SFE (eSFE) in case the flu pandemic becomes severe enough to necessitate a suspension of normal workload. The prospect of introducing an eSFE designed for income protection has always had a range of drawbacks and operational difficulties; for example practices would not have improvements in DESs or QOF reflected in their payments under an eSFE and neighbouring practices would almost certainly need to move to an eSFE together regardless of how they experience the pandemic.

Progress on creating an eSFE for 2009/10 has now stalled because of legal and political obstacles which cannot currently be overcome in a mutually acceptable way. Most of these problems are unique to 2009/10 and would be surmountable in future years.

We believe the best course of action now is to focus on constructing an eSFE that could be used from 2010/11 onwards if necessary. We appreciate that there have been pockets of real difficulty across the UK this year during the pandemic but we hope that our decision to put on hold this work now will be understood in the context of the currently mild pandemic. In the unlikely event that the pandemic suddenly worsens before April 2010, we believe we have done enough work on the eSFE to date to resurrect it rapidly.

Dosage schedule update for phase two of the H1N1 vaccination programme

The licence for Pandemrix has now been amended to allow one dose (0.25ml) in children. Patients who are immunocompetent and who have already received one dose of the vaccine do not need a second dose even if this has already been scheduled. Immunocompromised individuals should still receive a second dose as scheduled. [Read more about this in the letter by Professor Salisbury.](#)

Joint GPC/RCGP/DH updated flu guidance

The second edition of the joint GPC/RCGP/DH pandemic influenza guidance for GP practices, specific to swine flu (H1N1), was published last week. The original guidance, published in January 2009, was designed to help general practice plan for the possibility of having to work during a severe pandemic, such as avian flu. The updated guidance has been reviewed to take into account this year's swine flu outbreak and the guidance relating to it that has been published. [The guidance is available on the BMA website.](#)

Revised versions of DH clinical management guidelines

The DH has published revised versions of the [Pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza: Clinical management guidelines for adults and children](#). The change is in paragraph 5 on page 9, which has been extended to define what 'high dose' means in the context of this document.

The DH has also updated the [Pandemic H1N1 2009 influenza: Clinical management guidelines for pregnancy](#). There are two changes: a footnote has been added to paragraph 5 on page 17 reflecting the different requirements of the abortion legislation in England and Northern Ireland; they have also added a new paragraph 5 on page 19 to deal with the outcome of the ORACLE study which implicated co-amoxiclav with necrotising enterocolitis in preterm rupture of membranes.

Dispensing practices in England - processing of prescriptions

NHS Prescription Services (NHS RxS) will be writing to all dispensing practices in England in the week commencing 21 December to remind them that this month's payment, for prescriptions dispensed in October, will be the first payment where they may be financially affected if a patient or their representative has not correctly filled in the sections on a prescription form to declare that they are exempt from charge.

This is because the transitional arrangements that NHS RxS had in place for the first few months of processing dispensing doctor accounts on its new system came to an end from October. We previously reported that NHS Prescription Services started processing dispensing doctor accounts on its new system in July this year. The new system is much more effective at identifying if a patient or their representative has not correctly filled in the sections on a prescription form to declare that they are exempt from charge. Transitional arrangements were in place between the dispensing months June to September to give dispensing doctors and their practices time to make sure that their procedures for checking patient declarations were robust. The arrangement came to an end from October and dispensed prescriptions, and dispensing doctors should receive payment for these prescriptions in December / January from their PCT.

Senior partners will receive separate notification from NHS RxS from 21 December about how many items they have identified and how many charges they have collected.

NHS Prescription Services' helpdesk can give practices guidance on how to sort and submit their accounts on 0845 610 1171. Practices can also test their knowledge with [an online quiz](#).

Requirements to sign a death certificate

In October 2009 we were notified that some local Registrars of Death were requesting unnecessary information from GP practices because of a misunderstanding about the implications of the new GMC licence to practise - for example, practices were asked to supply the names of GPs who were licensed to sign death certificates, together with their GMC registration, their GMC licensing number and details of their qualifications allowing them to sign the forms.

We took this up with the GMC licensing team. As a result the GMC has clarified the situation with the General Registrar Office as well as updating its FAQ website advice.

We can confirm that there will be no GMC licence number and there will be no further qualifications required of a GP to sign a death certificate. With the introduction of the licence to practise in November 2009, Registrars need to check that the doctor signing a death certificate is licensed with

the GMC at the time of signing the form. There should not be a need to supply information to the Registrar prior to completing the form (particularly as the information could be out of date if supplied in advance). However, it would be helpful to Registrars if GPs could include their GMC number on death certificates so that it is easier for the Registrars to do the necessary checks.

QOF business rules

Version 16 of the business rules has now been published and is available on the [NHS PCC website](#).

Please note that for the QOF CVD PP1 indicator (Cardiovascular disease - primary prevention 1), the business rules have been amended to exclude patients under 35 years of age from indicator PP1. The age range for this indicator is now set as 30-74 years. Patients outside this age range should still be individually assessed and their risks reduced, although risk equations do not apply and thresholds for reductions are not currently available. PP2 applies to all age groups, as do the blood pressure control indicators in the hypertension set.

Continuing professional development

GPC members discussed the RCGP's CPD guide, which is [available on the RCGP website](#). The committee will be feeding back to the RCGP to emphasise the need for greater flexibility in the scheme in catering for the learning styles of individual GPs, and to highlight concerns around the concept of 'impact' for locum and out-of-hours GPs.

Health policy proposals survey – England only

All LMCs in England were sent an email last week regarding a survey of health policy proposals. The GPC is seeking to understand the view that grass roots GPs have of these policies. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey, taking account of the broad opinion of the GPs in your LMCs, as your responses will feed into the GPC's ongoing work in these areas. This survey does not replace the established methods of agreeing GPC policy, but it is important for us understand what GPs and LMCs across the country are thinking about these proposals at the present point in time.

Use the following link to go to the survey – please do this now if you can, it should take no more than five minutes to complete - www.bma.org.uk/LMChelpolycysurvey.

CQC registration fees

The Care Quality Commission (QC) is currently consulting on the registration fees to be charged to NHS trusts. We will be responding that no fee should be payable by NHS bodies or those providing NHS services (eg GP practices). While this consultation does not directly refer to GP practices, the CQC aims to consult later on charges to GP practices. We are therefore using our response as an opportunity to state that NHS GP practices should not be charged a registration fee.

Med1web / NovaChannel: update

In the past many GPs signed up to a Med1web form from NovaChannel AG under the misapprehension that the form offered a free listings service. However, in the small print there was a clause that this service was chargeable, and many GPs are now being pursued for payment for signing up to the form.

NovaChannel AG was a Swiss registered company, and its practices were being investigated by the Swiss Office of Fair Trading. We previously wrote to the Swiss Embassy and issued advice to practices based on their response. However, NovaChannel AG has now ceased trading from Switzerland, and we had heard that payment for the Med1web forms was now being pursued by United Lda (a Portuguese company). We have therefore also written to the Portuguese Embassy for their views. However, in the meantime, we are aware of one doctor who has recently received a letter from United Lda notifying him that they had reviewed his file and that, because he is not an independent doctor, they have deleted his particulars from the directory and that the contract is null and void. We therefore advise all NHS GPs who unwittingly signed up to the Med1web form to contact United Lda asking for their details to be removed from its directory and for any contract to be terminated. United Lda's address is: PO Box 1571, 1056-001 Lisbon, Portugal or email: info@med1web.com.

LMC conference 2010

LMCs are reminded that the deadline for sending in the names and addresses of appointed representatives to attend the conference is **8 January 2010**. It is necessary to adhere strictly to this deadline so that we can complete the election of LMC Conference representatives to attend the BMA's annual representative meeting (ARM). Please send your form as soon as possible to Karen Day at kday@bma.org.uk. Please also include the BMA membership number of any BMA members attending the LMC conference, even if they do not wish to attend the ARM.

'Communicating locally' - Launch of NPA / CPPE workshop

The National Pharmacy Association (NPA) and The Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE) have launched a package of workshop material, 'Communicating locally', designed to help GPs, trainee GPs and community pharmacists to improve how they communicate with their pharmacist or GP colleagues. The Clinical and Prescribing subcommittee of the GPC was involved in the development of these resources, which aim to help attendees to become more confident when communicating with other members of the healthcare team in discussions relating to patient-centred care.

The resources are available to anyone who wishes to use them. It is envisaged that workshops will be initiated by PCTs (with a GP and pharmacist appointed as joint facilitators) or run jointly by local medical committees and local pharmaceutical committees.

The resource is available from www.npa.co.uk and www.cppe.ac.uk.

GP employment law courses 2010

Managing change, managing performance, managing staff

Keeping track of employment legislation, best practice and other human resource issues can be a real headache. With the best will in the world, you know you cannot be an expert on everything: that is why you have the BMA right behind you to give expert advice and support. However, it is important to understand the principles of employment legislation and practical management of people issues to ensure a good working environment and that you do not find yourselves facing a legal challenge.

The BMA is offering three one-day courses introducing GP practices to managing change, managing performance and managing staff.

Cost to attend

Registration is open to GP partners or their practice managers and the registration fees are as below:

BMA members: £130.00 including VAT

Non-members: £190.00 including VAT

Priority will be given to BMA members who wish to attend.

For more information on dates and venues and the online booking form [please see the BMA website](#).

How to protect NHS jobs and services in a changing world

Thursday 11 February 2010, Dillington House, Ilminster, Somerset

The British Medical Association's South West Regional Council is organising this important one day conference to inform members about potential future developments in NHS services in the South West region with particular reference to the current financial constraints. Including keynote addresses from the Chief Executive Officer of the South West Regional Strategic Health Authority and from the BMA's Chairman of Council, this conference will offer BMA members an overview of the current changes and challenges facing the NHS.

The conference will aim to stimulate and inform debate on future service provision. Attendees will be better prepared for local discussions on change. An important aim will be to build an appreciation across primary and secondary care of the consequences of changes in service provision and service delivery.

Who should attend?

We hope that this conference will be of interest to anyone working in the NHS in the South West region.

Conference format

This one day conference includes a number of plenary presentations with time set aside for questions from the audience and discussion.

Registration fees

This conference is available only to BMA members. Registration fees include access to all sessions, refreshments, lunch and a delegate pack.

BMA members £95.00 including VAT.

If you are not a BMA member and would like to join, please contact BMA Conferences on 020 7383 6137/6923 and we will advise you on how to join the BMA in order to participate in this event.

Venue

The conference will be held at Dillington House, Ilminster, Somerset, TA19 9DT. Dillington House is a residential conference centre dating from the 16th century and set in parkland. Ample free car parking is available on site, and the nearest railway stations are Crewkerne, which is approximately 7 miles away, or Taunton, approximately 12 miles away.

How to book

Places at the conference are limited and will be offered on a first come, first served basis. To register for the conference, [please use the online form](#).

If you have any queries, please contact BMA Conferences on 020 7383 6137 / 6923 or by email at confunit@bma.org.uk.

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.



Season's greetings

On behalf of the GPC secretariat, we wish you all a joyful and restful Christmas and a happy 2010.

The GPC next meets on 18 February 2010, 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 9 February 2010. 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: www.bma.org.uk

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