

### GPC Media Coverage Report – October 2009

Swine flu and the roll out of the vaccination programme continued to be the focus of media attention during October. Questions emerged about the robustness of vaccine deliveries to practices, although these abated towards the end of the month as most GPs began to receive their allocations. The BMA offered a reassuring line to the public despite pressure from the media to criticise the programme during the first few weeks of October.

The Daily Mail also published a joint letter from the BMA and a GP in Surrey regarding an article in September that made claims about GP pay. The publication of the letter followed a complaint from the BMA to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) over the facts reported in the story.

#### **BMA mentions in national and regional media for October**

	<b>National</b>	<b>Regional</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Print:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Broadcasts:</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>32</b>

<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>National broadcast</b>	<b>National print</b>
Swine flu / vaccinations	1	3
Postal strike affecting swine flu notification	1	1
GP pay figures	-	1
Website to rate GPs	-	2
Incapacity benefit / sick notes	3	1
GP out-of-hours care	-	1
Public sector pay freeze proposals	5	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

<b>BMA spokespeople</b>	<b>Broadcast</b>	<b>Print</b>
Laurence Buckman	8	4
Richard Vautrey	-	1
Dean Marshall	1	-
Brian Dunn	1	-
BMA mention	-	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>

#### **Press Releases issued**

14/10/09      New GP practice rating system may not paint an accurate picture of quality, says BMA

#### **Letters to the media**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Signatory</b>	<b>Publication</b>	<b>Subject of letter</b>
29/10/09	Dr Laurence Buckman	Daily Mail	PCC letter – upheld complaint from the BMA regarding a story about GP pay

## **GPC Parliamentary and Assembly Activity Report**

### **WESTMINSTER**

The Parliamentary Unit in London keeps in contact with MPs across all the political parties.

#### **MP-GP practice visit scheme**

Nearly 300 MPs have asked to visit a GP practice in their constituency as part of the BMA's MP-GP practice visit scheme. Since the scheme was introduced in October 2008, 322 MPs have been in touch with the BMA about the scheme with more than 280 MPs wanting to take part.

#### **Q&A session between Norman Lamb MP and doctors**

Norman Lamb MP, the Liberal Democrat Health spokesman, participated in a Q&A session with the Eastern Regional Council on Tuesday 17th November 2009.

#### **Local and regional lobbying**

Salford and Trafford LMC met with Hazel Blears MP on Friday 16th October 2009. A wide range of issues were discussed including GP-led health centres and the relationship between primary and secondary care in the North West.

#### **Legislation**

The Queen's Speech, which will announce the Government's legislative agenda, will take place on Wednesday 18th November. Although it is not confirmed, it is expected that there may be an NHS Bill that may grant patients new legal rights to maximum waiting times for elective surgery and urgent cancer referrals; a Social Care Bill; and a possible Immigration Bill.

##### *Health Act 2009*

The Health Act 2009 received Royal Assent last week. The BMA closely followed progress of the Act through its parliamentary states. The Act covers a number of issues and the BMA was mainly concerned on the proposals relating to the NHS Constitution; direct payments; quality accounts; innovation; tobacco; and disclosure of GP income to HMRC.

##### *Coroners and Justice Act 2009*

The Coroners and Justice Act also received Royal Assent last week. The BMA was successful in ensuring that short death certificates, which omit the cause of death and can be used for administrative purposes, are included in the Act as part of the wide-ranging changes to the death certification system. These would operate alongside the full Medical Certificate of Cause of Death and would mean that the bereaved would not have to disclose sensitive information to organisations, for which the fact of death is sufficient.

##### *Equality Bill*

The Equality Bill has not finished its parliamentary stages and is expected to be carried over into the new session of Parliament. The main principles of the Equality Bill to strengthen protection, advance equality and streamline the present equality legislation are welcomed by the BMA. The BMA believes that the Bill will help lead to greater consistency and clarity within the law and will help, through mechanisms such as public sector equality duties, to ensure that healthcare organisations fulfil their responsibility to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in all aspects of healthcare.

#### **Select Committees**

The Health Select Committee is shortly expected to publish its report on 'Alcohol'. During the course of its wide ranging inquiry, the Committee heard evidence from a number of bodies including the police, the alcohol industry, medical organisations and the voluntary sector. A number of issues were raised during the evidence sessions, including alcohol pricing and advertising, the pressures on GP and A&E services, as well as the need for early diagnosis and intervention. Further information on the Committee's inquiry can be viewed at: [www.parliament.uk/parliamentary\\_committees/health\\_committee/hc0809pn08.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/health_committee/hc0809pn08.cfm)

The Health Select Committee has also decided to undertake an inquiry into commissioning. Some of the issues it will be considering include 'World Class Commissioning', the purchaser-provider split, commissioning and 'system reform', specialist commissioning, and commissioning for the quality and safety of services. The BMA has submitted written evidence to this inquiry and it can be viewed at:

[www.bma.org.uk/healthcare\\_policy/responses\\_consultations/healthcomevi.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/healthcare_policy/responses_consultations/healthcomevi.jsp)

Dr. Hamish Meldrum also appeared as witness before the Committee on 22nd October alongside London School of Economics Professor of Management Science, Gwyn Bevan, who also agreed with the BMA's views about the lack of evidence for the effectiveness of the purchaser-provider split and the market in healthcare. The uncorrected transcript of Dr. Meldrum's evidence is available at:

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhealth/uc1020-i/uc102002.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhealth/uc1020-i/uc102002.htm)

The Lords Economic Affairs Committee has launched a wide-ranging inquiry into PFI and off balance sheet debt across various sectors including hospitals. The BMA has submitted written evidence to this inquiry and Consultants Committee Chairman, Dr. Mark Porter, is due to give evidence to the Committee in December. The BMA's evidence to the Committee can be viewed at: [www.bma.org.uk/healthcare\\_policy/responses\\_consultations/pfievictee.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/healthcare_policy/responses_consultations/pfievictee.jsp)

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### **SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT**

The BMA Scotland public affairs officers keep in regular contact with key MSPs from all of the political parties.

#### Parliamentary Activity

The Scottish Parliament was in recess for 2 weeks during October so activity has been limited.

BMA Scotland raised questions in Parliament regarding regulations on the Health Board (Membership & Elections) Act 2009. There is still no firm guidance on the eligibility of doctors (GPs or NHS employed) to stand for election in the pilots scheduled to commence next year in Fife and Dumfries & Galloway. BMA Scotland has called on the Scottish Parliament to produce central guidance.

On 7 October Jon Ford (HPERU) on behalf of BMA Scotland appeared before the health committee to give evidence on the draft budget bill for 2010/11. The official report is available online at: [www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/hs/or-09/he09-2601.htm](http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/s3/committees/hs/or-09/he09-2601.htm)

BMA Scotland attended the SNP Annual Conference in Inverness along with Brian Keighley. We met with 1 MP and 7 MSPs including Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon and Health Minister Shona Robison. Discussions primarily centred around the Scottish Government strategy on alcohol misuse which is supported by the BMA. We also discussed possible amendments to the Tobacco and Primary Medical Services Bill.

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November 2009**