

**GPC Media Coverage Report – March 2010**

In March the main topics in the media regarding GPs were:

**Summary Care Record:** The Times, Mail, Express, Guardian, Financial Times and Telegraph, on its front page, covered the BMA's concerns about the summary care record, with a number of other follow up stories appearing later in the month, all critical of the speed of the roll-out.

**Self-care:** A campaign to encourage patients to self-care was launched with a letter and coverage in The Times, provoking a range of responses in its letters pages as well as commentary, both positive and negative, in both the Mail and the Mirror.

**BMA mentions in the national and regional media:**

	National	Regional	Total
<b>Print:</b>	<b>39</b>	43	<b>82</b>
<b>Broadcasts:</b>	<b>14</b>	35	<b>49</b>

SUBJECT	National broadcast	National print
Fit notes	-	1
Call to scrap prescription charges	-	2
Summary Care Record / privacy concerns	10	21
Self Care Campaign / use of GP appointments	3	3
Swine flu	-	1
GP out-of-hours	-	1
GP pay	-	3
Care of elderly	-	2
DDRB / public sector pay freeze	-	3
Sleep deprivation	-	1
Protecting services / Save our Surgery campaign mention	-	1
NHS drugs being sold abroad	1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>39</b>

SUBJECT	Regional media
Electronic patient records	48
General practice - self care	9
Assisted dying	3
NHS - funding	3
Abortion	2
Alcohol	2
Doctors pay and working conditions - Out of hours	2
NHS Prescription charges	2
Complementary medicine	1
Death	1
Fit notes	1

General Practice - walk in centres	1
Smoking	1
Surgery registration	1

**Press releases issued:**

- 01/03/10 Patients are not being adequately informed about electronic patient records, says BMA  
10/03/10 BMA response to announcement on doctors' pay  
10/03/10 BMA calls for roll-out of electronic patient records to be suspended

**Scotland**

**BMA Mentions in the Scottish Press**

*We do not currently have a monitoring service to pick up on broadcast mentions. The following includes BMA quotes or interviews relating to GP and public health issues.*

Subject	Scottish Press	Scottish Broadcast
Out of Hours	1	
Community Health Partnerships (LMC conference)	2	
Alcohol Misuse	14	
Physician Assisted Suicide	1	
Patient Data Security (LMC conference)	3	
Helmets for Horse Riders (LMC conference)	1	
Violent Patients	1	
NHS 24 (LMC conference)	2	
GP appointments		1
Treatment of depression	1	1
Patient / Doctor communication	1	
DDRB	1	
Maternity Care (LMC conference)	2	
GP funding (LMC conference)	2	
Nuffield Report (BMA Critique)	2	
Patient Rights Bill	11	
<b>Total</b>		

**Press Releases issued:**

- 1 March Pregnancy and alcohol - a dangerous cocktail says BMA Scotland  
11 March Scotland's doctors call for end to supermarket 'reward' points for alcohol  
11 March Financial pressures must not reduce effectiveness of Scottish general practice, warns GP leader  
18 March BMA Scotland comment on Patient Rights Bill  
18 March BMA publishes critique of flawed analysis of NHS in the UK

**Articles/Letters:**

Date	Author	Publication	Title
7/03/10	Brian Keighley	Scotland on Sunday	Five-point plan to fight obesity rates
19/03/10	Brian Keighley	Scotsman	Vulnerable groups will be at a disadvantage.
23/03/10	Dean Marshall	Scotsman	Health Targets
23/03/10	Dean Marshall	Herald	Health Checks
25/03/10	Dean Marshall	Daily Mail	Unnecessary Burden (Health Checks)
25/03/10	Dean Marshall	Courier	Wastefulness of SNP medicals
27/03/10	George Fernie	Caledonian Mercury	Why we need to change the organ donation system.

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

### WESTMINSTER

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

Parliament has now dissolved ahead of the General Election which will be held on 6th May. Parliament will reconvene on 18th May, with the State Opening of Parliament and the Queen's Speech on 25th May.

#### Legislation

Before the dissolution of Parliament, the following pieces of legislation completed their Parliamentary stages

*Personal Care at Home Act:* The fundamental aim of the Act is to provide free personal care at home for those with the greatest care needs. Before the Bill was introduced, local authorities were only able to provide specific community care services free of charge for up to six weeks; the Act removes this time limit. There were various efforts by members of the House of Lords to delay free personal care; these largely stemmed from concerns within local government about funding and implementation. As a result of these efforts, health ministers have agreed that new regulations will be introduced, which means that free personal care at home is unlikely to be introduced before April 2011.

*Children, Schools and Families Act:* The BMA lobbied extensively on the Children, Schools and Families Bill, which completed its passage through Parliament in April. Concerns focussed on provisions to provide information to Local Safeguarding Children's Boards. The BMA supports the statutory disclosure of relevant information to LSCBs in serious case reviews but was concerned that the Bill's provisions, requiring the disclosure of relevant information to LSCB's for the purpose of enabling or assisting in *all* of its functions, are too wide. The BMA is also concerned about provisions to allow the publication of the names of professional witnesses in family proceedings and the publication of personal medical information, which have remained part of the legislation.

*Equality Act:* The Act aims to streamline the various strands of equality legislation into a single piece of legislation.

#### Parliamentary Select Committees

Also before the dissolution of Parliament, various select committees published final reports on inquiries:

##### *Health Select Committee one-off evidence session on the use of overseas doctors in OOHs*

The Committee saw witnesses at a one-off evidence session on 11th March. DH Minister, Mike O'Brien and DH officials were questioned by the Committee as were also representatives from the General Medical Council, Royal College of GPs, NHS Chief Executives and Dr Fay Wilson for BADGER OOHs co-operative. GPC Chairman, Dr Laurence Buckman, also wrote to the Committee in response to the evidence session. The Committee in its final report concluded that changes must be made immediately to improve the vetting system for overseas doctors providing out-of-hours GP care in the UK. The Committee's report can be viewed at:

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmhealth/441/44102.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmhealth/441/44102.htm)

##### *Health Select Committee inquiry on commissioning*

Some of the issues that the Health Select Committee had been 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 submitted written evidence to this inquiry and Dr Hamish Meldrum appeared as a witness at the end of last year. In its final report, the Committee was critical of the purchaser/provider split and questioned whether 'World Class Commissioning' would lead to the necessary transformation of PCTs. The Committee's report can be viewed at: [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmhealth/268/26802.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmhealth/268/26802.htm)

##### *House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee inquiry on PFI*

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 submitted written evidence to this inquiry

and Dr Mark Porter appeared as a witness in December 2009. The inquiry is due to publish its final report this week. The Committee in its final report mentioned that it wants to see PFP spending accounted for more clearly. It also stated that Private Finance Projects are not always well suited to very large and complex schemes and that value for money tests need to be improved. It recommended that the Government learns from these lessons of the past and, in addition, considers for the future where risk transfer to the private sector might be extended (for example in the health and education sectors). The Committee's report can be viewed at:

[www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/ldconaf/63/6302.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200910/ldselect/ldconaf/63/6302.htm)

Party Manifestos ahead of the Westminster General Election

The Labour Party published its manifesto on 12th April. In terms of health, the manifesto aims to build a better health service by protecting NHS spending and by shifting to more preventative and personal care, clear patient guarantees and greater care in the home. More information can be viewed at: [www2.labour.org.uk/manifesto-splash](http://www2.labour.org.uk/manifesto-splash)

The Conservative Party published its manifesto on 13th April. In its approach, the manifesto outlines plans for more patient choice and moving away from targets. More information can be viewed at: [http://media.conservatives.s3.amazonaws.com/manifesto/cpmanifesto2010\\_hires.pdf](http://media.conservatives.s3.amazonaws.com/manifesto/cpmanifesto2010_hires.pdf)

The Liberal Democrats are due to publish their manifesto on 14th April.

BMA Manifesto

The BMA published a manifesto document in December 2009 as the centrepiece for the Association's General Election strategy. The manifesto captures priorities across the Association (it contains the workforce priorities of the individual branches of practice; commentary on the economic downturn and the impact on the health service; NHS reform; and also priorities for public health). The GP section on the manifesto can be viewed on page 20 of the document online at: [www.bma.org.uk/lobbying\\_campaigning/manifesto.jsp](http://www.bma.org.uk/lobbying_campaigning/manifesto.jsp)

To help BMA members contact candidates, the BMA has launched a toolkit for members who wish to take part in pre-election activities. Whether writing to candidates or arranging local events, any action helps contribute to policy at both local and national level. The toolkit contains several resources:

- A downloadable version of the BMA's manifesto.
- FAQs for members with practical advice on how to set up local meetings.
- FAQs on the law surrounding political neutrality and defamation at election time.
- Template emails/letters for those members that want to make contact with their local candidates.
- Details for signing up to the BMA Manifesto Facebook Group as well as following the BMA on Twitter.

BMA Parliamentary Unit  
13 April 2010

## SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

On 3 March, the BMA appeared before the Scottish Parliament Health Committee to give oral evidence on the Alcohol Etc (Scotland) Bill. The session focussed on the evidence base and effectiveness of minimum pricing per unit of alcohol.

I attended the Scottish Liberal Democrat Conference on behalf of the BMA and met with Ross Finnie (Shadow Health Secretary) and party research staff to talk about General Practice in Scotland: The Way Ahead. I also discussed the BMA's policy on alcohol misuse with various delegates attending conference.

The Scottish Parliament Health Committee published its report on Clinical Portal Technology. The BMA had provided written and oral evidence to this inquiry and our concerns regarding security of patient information featured heavily in the report recommendations.

I met with Jackie Baillie, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary and her research team to discuss General Practice in Scotland: The Way Ahead. She welcomed the report and was particularly interested in our

recommendations on access, out of hours and premises. I have also met with the Conservative research team to discuss the report – the issue of access was of particular interest to them.

The Public Services Reform (Scotland) Bill was debated for the final time in the Scottish Parliament. The BMA briefed on concerns about widening access to patient records by non-medically qualified individuals and this was raised during the debate. The Government has made a commitment to consult the BMA on the Code of Practice for this Bill.

The BMA provided oral and written evidence to an Alcohol Commission established to consider policies to tackle alcohol misuse. Dr Alan McDevitt (SGPC) and myself provided an overview of the BMA's policies including support for minimum pricing.

Gail Grant  
Senior Public Affairs Officer  
BMA Scotland  
April 2010