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General Practitioners
Committee

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Dear Professor Weetman,

Hepatitis B immunisations for medical students

As the beginning of the new academic year approaches, we would like take this opportunity to remind medical schools of their responsibility in ensuring appropriate provision of the hepatitis B vaccine to all enrolled medical students, as well as applicants.

GPs get many requests for hepatitis B immunisation from healthcare students prior to, or on entering, a course. It is our view that it is the legal responsibility of medical schools to ensure this vaccine is available as part of their occupational health duties to students.

As our recent guidance *Focus on hepatitis B immunisations* clarifies, this vaccination should also be accompanied by training in both risk reduction and methods of coping with needle stick injuries. We are concerned that in some instances these educational needs would not be met if the hepatitis B vaccine was administered by individual GPs and not as a systematic immunisation programme.

Our guidance on hepatitis B immunisations is available on our website at this link:

<http://bma.org.uk/practical-support-at-work/doctors-as-managers/managing-your-practice/focus-hepatitis-b-immunisations>

Having given the vaccine, whoever does so has to arrange for an antibody assay, deal with non-responders and plan repeat vaccination, as well as educating the future student about needlestick injuries. This is one of the main reasons that provision of this service remains outside of normal GP care.

We would be grateful if all UK medical schools could be reminded of their obligations in providing occupational health services to their students.

I would be very happy to answer any queries you may have on this subject.

Yours sincerely,



British Medical Association
bma.org.uk

Dr Laurence Buckman
Chairman, General Practitioners Committee