

25 January 2019

Dear Colleagues,

National variation in number of patients per GP

The Times ran a special feature on the crisis facing general practice on Saturday, looking at how GPs are increasingly expected to look after more and more patients. Commenting on the story, I said: “With the number of GP partners falling by 2,000 in the last three years, recruitment and retention is an escalating problem and GPs are under pressure like never before. Faced with increasing demand, a rapidly ageing population, an ever-tightening squeeze on funding and mounting practice costs, it’s no surprise that stress and burnout are so prevalent. Fewer GPs and increasing patient demand mean GPs are finding themselves increasingly unable to give their patients the quality of time and expert care that they deserve. All areas of the country have a workforce recruitment and retention problem, but this can be particularly acute in rural areas. The focus on primary care and community-based health in the government’s Long-Term Plan for the NHS are welcome ambitions but they will take time to realise. Crucial to delivering lasting improvements for both GPs and patients is the urgent need to invest in the workforce so that practices can sustain the highest standards of primary care.” Read the full story [in the Times](#). I also appeared on the BBC News Channel and BBC Kent to talk about this story.

GP pensions impacting workforce crisis

I did an interview with the Sunday Times about GP pensions where I warned that recent changes to tax laws and regulations for GPs are exacerbating the workforce crisis. I also said: “Hardworking GPs — and doctors of all kinds — have been unfairly hit in recent years by complex regulations and tax changes impacting their pensions, meaning many are inadvertently facing huge bills at the end of the year. A growing number of doctors, and not just older medics with years of experience under their belts, are effectively being penalised for working hard.” Read the full article [here](#).

Branded generic prescriptions

Dr Alan Stout, chair of Northern Ireland GP committee, was interviewed by [BBC News online](#) about confusion over the branding of prescription drugs leading to unnecessary repeat prescriptions. Dr Stout said that GPs are advised to prescribe ‘branded generic’ medication – the cheapest most cost-effective version of that medication and one that changes regularly. This frequent changing of brand can in turn cause confusion among elderly patients or those on a long list of medication.

Falsified Medicines Directive guidance

The Falsified Medicines Directive will become effective on 9 February 2019, however we expect there to be a long lead in time and that full implementation will not happen for at least 12 months, although this is still to be confirmed. The Directive introduces tougher rules to ensure medicines are safe and that the trade in medicines is rigorously controlled. This will have an impact on all practices and therefore, they should be preparing for implementation in order to demonstrate compliance with the Directive. Please go to our [website](#) for our guidance (it is also attached) and read Krishna Kasaraneni’s, GPC England Executive Team, blog on Brexit and the Falsified Medicines Directive [here](#).

Practices are advised to contact their system suppliers and await their confirmation as to timescales and process; we are currently waiting for further details from NHS England and these will be communicated as soon as they are available.

Brexit - Continuity of medicines supply legislation

The Department of Health and Social Care has responded to the consultation on changes to the Human Medicines Regulation 2012 to ensure the continuity of supply of medicines in the event of a serious shortage as a result of Brexit and published the Statutory Instrument and explanatory memorandum, which is available [here](#). The new protocols will allow for substitution, in restricted circumstances, of a different quantity of a prescription only medicine, or a different prescription only medicine, to that ordered by the prescriber

Update on vaccines for 2019/20 seasonal flu vaccination programme

NHS England has published an update on vaccines for 2019/20 seasonal flu vaccination programme. As stated previously, QIVe (18 to 64-year olds in clinical at-risk groups and other eligible groups, including frontline health and social care workers) and aTIV (65 years and over) remain recommended. In addition, QIVc (Flucelvax® Tetra), is now licensed for patients from the age of 9 and considered to be suitable for all patients eligible for QIVe and aTIV, meaning one vaccine instead of two. The high-dose trivalent vaccine (TIV-HD) has also been licensed **but will not be reimbursed by NHS England due to its high cost.**

Practices should order the licensed vaccines (aTIV, QIVe and QIVc) for the 2019/20 season. Read the letter [here](#).

Implementation of the medical examiner system

From April 2019 a new medical examiner led system will begin to be rolled out within hospitals in England and Wales. The non-statutory system will introduce a new level of scrutiny whereby all deaths will be subject to either a medical examiner's scrutiny or a coroner's investigation. The government envisage that once the ME service is established within a Trust, the system will then look to be extended to include deaths within the community. Please see our [website](#) for a fuller picture of the implementation, how this will affect GPs, and what the BMA are doing to support you.

Doctors re-trained as GPs – expressions of interest

Health Education England (HEE) are developing a new recruitment video and are seeking expressions of interest from doctors who decided to re-train as a GP or GP trainees who have swapped specialty training. Filming will be based in London and the South East and if you are interested in being involved, please email HEE at gprecruitment@hee.nhs.uk

BMA's GP practice support services

The BMA has launched its [GP practice support services campaign](#), aimed at GP partners and practice managers in the UK, this week. As a GP partner and BMA member, we've made it simple to access a range of practice support services in one place. The GP or their practice manager can call the BMA to discuss their practice needs. This includes access to HR support provided by the BMA's employer advice service, legal services from BMA Law, financial and insurance services, and of course advice from the GPC policy team. Members could also join one of our learning and development courses.

To discuss their requirements practices are asked to call 0300 123 1233 or email support@bma.org.uk. If you are require further materials (A5 leaflets, cards and/or A6 booklets) please email fieldevents@bma.org.uk stating: the materials you require, how many, where to send them and by when.

GPC regional representative elections

Nominations are now open for GPC regional representatives for the 2019-2022 sessions. Representatives will be elected for the following regions and nations:

- Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire
- Hertfordshire
- North & South Essex
- Barking & Havering, Redbridge & Waltham Forest, City & East London
- Cumbria & Lancashire
- Wigan & Bolton, Bury & Rochdale, West Pennine
- Northern Ireland
- Ayrshire & Arran, Borders, Dumfries & Galloway, Lanarkshire
- South & West Devon, Cornwall & Isles of Scilly
- Hampshire & Isle of Wight
- Kent
- Surrey & Croydon
- East Yorkshire, North Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire
- Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, Wakefield

Nominations are also open in a by-election for the North Yorkshire, Bradford representative (elected for the 2019-2020 session).

To find out more, including an election pack with the eligibility criteria and election timetable, click [here](#). Nominations will remain open until **12pm Monday 4 February**. The election will take place using the BMA's online election system, and to participate you will need your BMA online login details. You can create an online account or recover your account details by clicking [here](#) (you do not need to be a BMA member). If you have any questions, please contact elections@bma.org.uk.

BMA Expert Witness Conference – 8 March 2019

The [BMA Expert Witness Conference](#) will be held on 8 March 2019 at BMA House. A one-day conference, for all levels of experience, covering the essentials of working competently as an expert witness. If you are interested in working as a GP expert witness, register your interest by emailing confunit@bma.org.uk. Further information is available [here](#)

Read the latest GPC newsletter [here](#)

Have a good weekend.

Richard