

Contract Negotiations

Attached is a useful paper from Dr Steve Edmunds, GPC Member for Staffordshire and Shropshire.

An invitation has been sent to South Staffordshire GPs to attend a meeting at Swinfen Hall, near Lichfield at 7pm on Monday 4th February 2008. Dr Grant Ingrams from the GPC will be speaking to us on the current state of Negotiations and the course of action on the government offers. The LMC is keen to hear your views and would urge every practice to send a GP member.

Out of Hours and Badger Harmoni

Badger Harmoni have begun their meetings around South Staffordshire with GPs currently providing OOH and others that are interested in joining their service. Practices may also wish to send a GP to hear what the service will be in the new arrangements.

Concern was raised by the 30 GPs working in BURDOC about their entitlement to TUPE and the lowered pay rates offered by Badger Harmoni. The advice of the BMA employment lawyer is that the GPs would be able to demonstrate that they are employees and for the purpose of TUPE are protected on a transfer. The LMC is aware that many other doctors working in Out of Hours may not have contracts of employment with the PCT and therefore will not be in a similar situation as the BURDOC GPs with respect to TUPE. It is the LMC advice that these GPs should seek advice from the BMA if they are members and can also speak with the LMC Secretary if concerned.

You may have noted that the PCT wrote to all GPs inviting them to work in Queens Hospital Burton and Mid Staffs A&E Departments at an hourly rate of £100. The stated aim is to work alongside A&E staff to divert patients away from a hospital admission and where appropriate patients attend appointments at the Primary Care Centre.

QoF Visits

Those of us who have undergone a recent QoF visit will have noticed that the approach is interrogative compared to the previous advisory and supportive role of the visiting team. Concerns have been raised at the LMC about the process and content of some of these visits, so would appreciate any feedback being directed to the LMC office. We have also requested the PCT to provide feedback if there are any common factors that have been missed by practices.

Care Pathway for the Management of Physical Health

CARE PATHWAY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF THE PHYSICAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF SERVICE USERS FROM SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE HEALTHCARE TRUST

You may have received this form when referring patients to SSHCT who have then

requested a comprehensive physical health assessment. The LMC have reminded SSHCT that it is not a statutory requirement for GPs to complete this form and some may prefer to forward a usual letter of referral which would include current physical problems and medication. However, the document can be provided in computer format so GPs may wish to incorporate it into their systems within practices and use the form accordingly.

The LMC also informed SSHCT that many of us have problems receiving care plans for patients with severe mental illness who are currently under their care. Joe Wall, Associate Director of Clinical Effectiveness has reassured us that they will include the need to send a printed copy of the care plan to GPs in line with the longstanding local health and social care CPA policy. He expects that we will see an improvement over the next few weeks.

Named Consultant Referrals & Choose and Book

We are pleased to hear that the PCT will be ensuring that named consultant referrals will be implemented soon. Jim Barlow has confirmed that funding by the PCT for Choose and Book will continue irrespective of any imposed contract changes from April 2008.

Prescribing Practice

The LMC would like to remind you that we are legally responsible for any prescription we sign, so it is important to be familiar with the drug being prescribed. The GMC's guidance Good Practice in Prescribing Medicines (2006) (<http://www.gmc-uk.org>), states:

‘When prescribing medicines you must ensure that your prescribing is appropriate and responsible and in the patient’s best interests. To do this you must... ensure you are familiar with current guidance published in the British National Formulary and BNF for Children, including the use, side-effects and contraindications of the medicines that you prescribe.’

We need to remember this when feeling under pressure from hospital colleagues to prescribe drugs that we are not familiar with.

Cervical Cytology

The LMC was represented by Dr Janet Eames at a District Cervical Cytology Group meeting last year to put across the LMC concerns about the requirement for smear takers to perform 20 smears each year in order to remain on the smear takers’ register. Unfortunately the LMC view did not prevail and this requirement remains at present. It was reported at the meeting that the lab continues to receive inappropriate samples. Please remember that under the 2004 Cervical Cytology Protocol:

Cervical cytology samples should not be taken from women under the age of 25yrs. Women with clinical symptoms should be referred to gynaecology and should not have an unscheduled cytology sample taken (because sampling is a screening

procedure and not diagnostic).

Another area of concern is that uptake of screening is falling especially among younger women. It was reported that 2 consumer surveys conducted in the past 10 years have suggested that some women find it difficult to make appointments outside their 9-5 working hours or to fit in with a practice's smear clinic. Having explained our contracted hours to the committee Dr Janet Eames agreed to pass this information onto GPs in case it is helpful to any practices struggling with poor uptake. The LMC will continue to lobby about the requirements to remain on the smear takers' register.

Sessional GPs Newsletter

The latest sessional GPs Subcommittee Newsletter is available at <http://www.bma.org.uk?ap.nsf/Content/Hubcommitteeneewsgeneralpractitioners>

Please could practice managers download this if they employ sessional GPs or contact the LMC office for a copy.

GPC Guidance Notes

The GPC has two new guidance notes available on the BMA website: -

- * The dual role of practice based commissioner and GP provider: avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring probity; and
- * Practice based commissioning in 2008-09.

Dates for Next Main LMC and Sub Com Meetings

South Staffordshire LMC - 13th March 2008, South Staffordshire PCT, Edwin House, Second Avenue, Centrum 100, Burton on Trent.

South East Staffordshire Sub Committee - 3rd March 2008, South Staffordshire PCT, Edwin House, Second Avenue, Centrum 100, Burton on Trent.

South West Staffordshire Sub Committee - 6th March 2008, South Staffordshire PCT, Anglesey House, Towers Business Park, Rugeley.

Dr V Spleen

Dear Reader

I see no reason why I should feel 'under the weather' (despite this weather!) after such successes following our new contract. Our success was not just because our negotiators struck a good deal, but mainly because we worked hard to make best use of the contract. Many of us got 1000 out of 1000 QoF points and majority of us achieved over 90%. This can be classed as an honours grade or a pass with distinction! It is probably this that made our politicians and press so jealous.

History shows that we have always made best use of ANY contract or other NHS changes. So why fear Extended Hours. Let it happen. I believe we have the capacity to twist changes in our favour.

This will not be the last of the changes enforced on us. In fact I feel bored when no changes are taking place! Maybe this is what keeps me going.

So make a New Year Resolution—'I shall not sulk!'

Happy New Year!

Yours faithfully

Venture

The views expressed in this column are those of the author and not necessarily those of the LMC.