

Mr J Barlow

We welcome Jim Barlow to his appointment as Head of Primary Care Commissioning, replacing Ms Elaine Evers. Many of you will remember Jim from his days on the old Health Authority and then Burntwood Lichfield and Tamworth PCT. Farewell to Elaine and we wish her all the best in pursuing her interests as a pharmacist.

Staffordshire Condition Management Programme

We mentioned this programme in the last newsletter and its aims to “support people to understand and manage their health condition in way that enables them to contemplate employment and enjoy an enhanced quality of life”. We are pleased to report that the programme manager has agreed to stop requesting extra medical information from GPs and routine referrals to exercise on prescription. However the LMC would like to point out the usefulness of the scheme to GP colleagues when considering patients with long-term sickness and getting them back to work. The programme is very happy for GPs to refer to the service to provide support for these type of patients who are on incapacity benefits and enable them to return to employment.

Closure of Staffs County Council Residential Homes

A representative from the County Council recently explained to the LMC that they have carried out a review of residential care. It was stated that residential homes are not fit for purpose with the client requesting to stay at home. There was a need to develop more suitable services for the elderly and EMI in order to keep them at home. There are several issues around day care provision by the private sector. Every client would have a needs assessment and a decision would be made on where they want to go including the relatives' wishes.

LMC members queried the capacity of the private sector and whether the overall trend was a reduction in funding of social care in the community. We await the ongoing consultation process.

Out of Hours Arrangements for Dentistry

PCTs became responsible for ensuring that an appropriate dental out of hours service is provided for their area from 1st April 2006.

Patients with dental problems out of hours are advised to call NHS Direct. Call Handlers then carry out a call-streaming triage where patients will either be given advice, referred to Accident and Emergency, advised to attend their next available appointment at their own dental surgery, referred to a Dental Access Centre or offered a more detailed RGN triage.

The PCT provides Dental Access Centres services at Stafford, Cannock, Uttoxeter, Burton and Tamworth to treat patients with urgent and some non-urgent conditions who cannot obtain the services of a general dental practitioner. Evening and weekend

sessions are available for those with urgent conditions.

Additional daytime services provision that has been commissioned will allow greater access to routine dental care and advice; thus reducing the burden on out-of-hours services.

Attached is the paper from the PCT which clarifies this advice.

Working with Carers: Guidelines for Good Practice

The guidance suggests a formal carers strategy, which could include literature for carers in surgeries or clinics and also having a specific named contact for carers at the surgery. It is available at <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Workingwithcarers> or a copy can be requested at the LMC Office.

VAT on Medical Services - updated BMA Web Pages

An additional link has recently been added to the BMA website within the VAT section. There is a useful summary table which outlines the VAT liability of different services provided by doctors.

<http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/manuals/vatmanual/vathealth/VATHLT2130.htm>

Mental Health Act 2007

The Mental Health Act 2007, revised to introduce new mental health legislation based on amendment of the 1983 Mental Health Act, received Royal Assent on 19 July 2007. The BMA's Parliamentary Unit and the Ethics Department has been working to ensure that the Act promotes the highest clinical and ethical standards of practice. Despite positive changes secured by BMA campaigning, concerns remain over these new mental health laws.

The legislation, which comes into force in November 2008, introduces the wider use of SCTOs (supervised community treatment orders), under which patients can be required to take medication in their own homes. It could also raise the number of people categorised as mentally ill. As a result, it could mean that GPs find themselves increasingly responsible for a greater number of mental health patients.

A government consultation on a code of practice covering implementation of the new legislation is due out in September and the BMA will be fully engaged with the consultation to ensure that this legislation is as ethical as it possibly can be.

The BMA and other organisations campaigned against aspects of the Act such as the possibility those with untreatable personality disorders could be detained, even if nothing medical could be done for them. Although last-minute amendments alleviated a number of doctors' fears, there is still concern that in some cases no psychiatrist would be involved in the care of a patient detained under the Act and that, in theory, a hospital detention order could be renewed without the recommendation of a medically

qualified practitioner.

The amendments ensure that:

- * Patient can be held against their will only if treatment is available to alleviate or prevent a deterioration in their condition, or one or more of its symptoms and manifestations
- * Patients detained under the Act will have statutory rights of advocacy
- 8 Treatment for children and young people with mental disorders must be given in an environment suitable for their age and geared to meet their needs
- * Conditions imposed on patients under SCTOs must relate to their health and nothing else
- * Renewal of a hospital detention order must be approved by the patient's responsible clinician as well as another professional involved in the patient's care.

The GPC, together with the Royal College of GPs, is in the process of developing an information pack on how the new law will work and its potential impact on GPs. The GPC is also working with other department within the BMA to ensure that implementation of the new mental health legislation is as workable and ethical as possible.

Dates for Next Main LMC and Sub Com Meetings

South Staffordshire LMC - 13th September 2007, South Staffordshire PCT, Block D, Beecroft Court, Beecroft Road, Cannock.

South East Staffordshire Sub Committee - 17th September 2007, South Staffordshire PCT, Merlin House, Etchell Road, Bitterscote, Tamworth.

South West Staffordshire Sub Committee - 20th September 2007, South Staffordshire PCT, Block D, Beecroft Court, Beecroft Road, Cannock.

Dr V Spleen

Dear Reader

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the column this month because I am a retired GP. However I still work part-time and I am really enjoying it. The Pension is not as great as I expected but my wife says this is because I spend too much on antiques and old books. Mind you the lump sum was tremendous and eased a few problems here and there.

Recently I worked over the border in one of these new LIFT buildings. This is supposed to be the primary care equivalent of PFI. The building was enormous with three floors but to my surprise there is only one GP working in the whole of the ground floor. An old friend of mine who is still working tells me that her surgery has the equivalent ground floor space but used by six GPs at a time. Another friend works in Nottingham where there has been a right "who, ha" from the GPs moving from

dilapidated premises to LIFT buildings and finding that the tenancy costs were much higher than expected.

I do wonder about the trend of our younger colleagues' lack of enthusiasm in investing in their own premises. We struggled for years to get out of the old health authority buildings where you could not change a light bulb without permission and move into our own buildings. But of course they all have mortgages over £250K these days so it's not too surprising that they are not very keen. Mind you that reminds me that my old surgery should be paying up soon for my share of the building so I must drop a gentle reminder to my previous partners to hurry this along. So maybe Patsy Hewitt was right that the private sector has always been involved in financing parts of the Health Service.

I hope you all have a good summer and thanks for employing me as a locum while you are away. Now that also reminds me about appraisal but then that's another long story

Yours faithfully

Venture

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