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Swine Flu

The situation with swine flu is changing rapidly. The BMA website has the latest guidance plus links to other key websites, including the Health Protection Agency at <http://www.hpa.org.uk/>.

The GPC will be writing to GPs with an update on the pandemic flu arrangements and the current progress of some of the issues that were raised in the joint DH/BMA pandemic flu guidance, in particular those relating to sessional GPs. The joint guidance can be found on the BMA website at http://www.bma.org.uk/health_promotion_ethics/influenza/panfluguiddec08.jsp

We would urge colleagues to keep abreast of developments on a daily basis and to regularly check the latest guidance on the BMA website to keep updated of the latest developments; this is particularly important for sessional GPs who may not routinely receive communications sent out to practices.

Patient Survey (PE2 and PE8)

All Surrey and Sussex practices will have received letters from the LMC office outlining the concerns expressed about the current Patient Survey and in particular the results of the PE7 and PE8 questions; it is on the responses to these two questions that GPs will receive QOF payments for 23.5 and 35 points respectively. Practices may be able to appeal their PE7 and PE8 indicators as the QOF forms part of the nGMS contract and the dispute resolution procedures apply.

To avoid possibly substantial financial implications and adverse effects on 2009/10 aspiration payments, practices are advised to sign off QMAS, but when doing so, state that they reserve the right to raise a dispute regarding the accuracy of any section. The LMC understands that a GPC recommended template letter for practices to use should be available shortly.

A national resolution of this issue is being sought and details will be publicised when available.

Electronic Prescribing and Non-Medical Prescribers

The office has received confirmation that non-medical prescribers are able to issue bar-coded scripts under the initial Release 1 phase of electronic prescribing, although the independent prescriber would then need to sign the script. It would be inappropriate for the non-medical prescriber to be added to the system as a “doctor” and this would call into question the governance of the arrangements within a practice.

GMC Registration and Licence to Practice

The GMC has sent out letters to all general practitioners asking for a decision to be made on whether they wish to be registered and licensed when this process starts in Autumn 2009. All GP colleagues who wish to continue in active practice will need to be both registered and licensed, and either complete an on-line statement or return a form to the GMC requesting appropriate action.

The re-licensing process via the GMC is commencing independently of revalidation but licensed practitioners will be subject to revalidation rules when it is introduced. They will also be expected to follow 'Good Medical Practice' guidelines.

GPSoc

In light of a few concerning reports that practices are being encouraged to change their GP IT systems, we would like to remind you that under GPSoc arrangements practices must be offered a guaranteed choice from a number of GPSoc accredited systems. While practices and PCTs need to work together to make the right choices for patient care in their local health community there should be no question of coaxing practices to change to systems that they do not wish to adopt. The GPSoc initiative provides a number of benefits including:

- Clarity of IT service level support to be provided to practices by their PCT (via the GPSoc PCT-Practice Agreement which the majority of practices have already signed) and a process for escalating disputes.
- Upgrade of existing, accredited GP IT systems to take advantage of the new services provided by NPfIT including electronic prescribing and GP2GP transfer of electronic patient records.
- Released funding for PCTs to resource training and implementation of local IT solutions – as a result of Connecting for Health (CfH) centrally funding items such as software licences.

Practices should contact the LMC Office if they have any concerns about the implementation of GPSoc in their area.

Locum Work and Superannuation

Colleagues should bear in mind that, although directly employed locums' work is superannuable, the work undertaken by any locums employed through locum agencies is not superannuable as the locums are, effectively, employed by the agencies and not the NHS.

Urgent Care - a practical guide to transforming same-day care in general practice

A sponsored report *Urgent care: a practical guide to transforming same-day care in general practice* has been published by the Primary Care Foundation. The report is supported by both the BMA and the RCGP and it focuses on a range of practical steps general practice can take to improve patient care and safety, as well as reducing workload in the practice and emergency hospital admissions.

Practices are encouraged to review their arrangements in light of the document which can be found at <http://www.primarycarefoundation.co.uk/page9/page19/files/gp-urgent-care-report.pdf>.

Using NHS Numbers

A patient's NHS number should always be included on any communications, correspondence and filing system involving patient-identifiable data. The NHS Number is the only national unique patient identifier currently in operation in the NHS.

The use of the NHS Number is fundamental to improving patient safety across all care settings by:

- Reducing clinical risk caused through misallocation of patient information.
- Resolving some of the barriers to safely sharing information across healthcare settings.
- Assisting with long term follow-up processes and audit.

Using the NHS number is not just about data quality or finding the NHS Number to put on a record so that data sets are completed. It can fundamentally underpin patient safety and clinical quality by enabling safer and more effective transfer of information across the NHS.

NHS Surrey is launching a project which will ensure that the NHS number is adopted as the primary number for all patient-identifiable information and will make the public aware of its importance when accessing health services. The key aim of the project is to improve patient safety by using the NHS Number to link patients to their records. The NHS Number should be present in all active patient records and determined as early as possible in the episode of care.

Apologies and Explanations

The NHS Litigation Authority has revised its guidance on apologies and explanations and has conveyed its advice in a letter to NHS bodies dated 1 May 2009. The letter provides a very clear and concise approach to be adopted in responding to complaints and reinforces that apologising does not indicate fault or apportion blame. <http://www.nhs.uk/NR/rdonlyres/00F14BA6-0621-4A23-B885-FA18326FF745/0/ApologiesandExplanationsMay1st2009.pdf>

Heatwave: Advice for Health and Social Care Professionals

As recent weather conditions have proven, we can be experiencing stormy weather, torrential rain and not particularly high temperatures one day and suddenly the next day we are hit by a heatwave. Heatwaves often arrive with little warning and illness and death can occur within the first couple of days, so it's best to make preparations before high temperatures are forecast. Since we are approaching mid-summer, now is the time to make sure we are prepared.

The Department of Health has published revised heatwave guidance, amongst which is a factsheet for health and social care professionals. This forms part of a national programme to reduce the health risks by alerting people to the dangers and encouraging them to plan in advance what to do in the event of a heatwave. If you have not yet seen the factsheet, you can download it, together with other Heatwave Programme publications, from http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_099036

Child protection - a tool kit for doctors

The BMA has produced a tool kit which is designed for a general audience of health professionals to provide a brief and accessible guide to doctors' responsibilities in child protection cases in England and Wales. It does not aim to be comprehensive, rather to act as a prompt for doctors where they believe that a child may be at risk of neglect or abuse, and can be downloaded from <http://www.bma.org.uk/ethics/childprotectiontoolkit.jsp?page=1>

Sessional GP Newsletter

The GPC have produced a newsletter for sessional GPs. The aim of this newsletter is to keep salaried and locum GPs (known collectively as sessional GPs) up-to-date with the wide range of new and on-going issues affecting them, as well as the work that the GPC's Sessional GPs Subcommittee undertakes behind the scenes on their behalf. The newsletter can be found at http://www.bma.org.uk/images/gpsessnews0509_tcm41-185790.pdf

LMC/PCT Liaison

Your LMC continues to hold regular meetings with your PCT. If you have something which you wish the LMC to raise on your behalf, please contact the LMCs Office who will be able to confirm the date of the next LMC/PCT liaison meeting for your area.

LMC Vacancies

Following the elections held earlier this year, there are still a few vacancies on each of our five LMCs: Croydon, East Sussex, Kingston & Richmond, Surrey and West Sussex. A number of new members have already joined the LMCs this year but more are always needed to ensure that GPs are properly represented. Members are paid an honorarium and travelling expenses. If you are interested in representing your colleagues and joining your LMC, please contact Anne Benney for further details (Tel: 01372-389270, email: anne.benney@sslmcs.co.uk).

Practice Vacancies

If you would like a vacancy in your practice to be advertised on the LMCs website (free of charge), please send details to Liz Gosman at eagosman@btinternet.com.

Current vacancies include:

Practice Nurse – Teddington, Middlesex
Practice Nurse – Twickenham, Middlesex
Salaried GP – Kew Gardens, Richmond, Surrey
Patient Services Manager – Pulborough, West Sussex
Practice Nurse – Twickenham, Middlesex
Salaried GP – Shirley, Croydon
Salaried GP – Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex
Practice Nurse – Walton-on-Thames, Surrey
Practice Manager – Ottershaw, Surrey
Nurse Practitioner – Oxted, Surrey
Practice Nurse (p/t) – Shepperton, Middlesex
GP Retainer – Surbiton, Surrey

Surrey and Sussex LMCs issue the LMC Line bulletin which combines frequently asked questions, issues raised at the GPC and information about LMC activities.

If you wish to make a brief submission, please send it to Mrs Liz Gosman or Dr Julius Parker at the LMCs office:-

The White House, 18 Church Road, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 8BB.

Tel. 01372 389270 Fax. 01372 389271 E-mail: eagosman@btinternet.com or Julius.Parker@sslmc.co.uk

Visit our website for further information: www.lmcs.info