



Londonwide LMCs

The professional voice of London general practice

Mword Issue 86 - Dr Michelle Drage's latest update for GPs and practice teams

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Dear Colleague, Mad Hatters and other stories...

Health and Social Care Levy – Nothing for general practice.

Pantomime – Not.

Abuse of our colleagues. Abuse of our profession.

The Media.

1. Health and Social Care Levy – Nothing for general practice. Last night MPs voted in favour of a new tax. In a statement to Parliament on 7 September the Prime Minister announced plans to substantially increase funding for health and social care over the next three years, to be funded by a new tax: the Health and Social Care Levy. By increasing National Insurance contributions (NICs) by 1.25%, and making this payable by those above State Pension age who are not liable to pay NICs on their earnings at present. Put to one side that this is a volte face on the election manifesto promises made by the Government. More money is good, right? More money for health? Well, the devil is in the detail. The bottom line is that there's nothing in it for us to help our patients. On the face of it, we are told to expect reduced waiting lists, which could mean better expedited referrals (as if)... except we know that the staff and the infrastructure isn't there. Well we all know how that story goes. And just when you realised it wasn't April 1st, up pops the "GPs to use Artificial Intelligence to help manage elective care waiting list" story from Costanza Pearce. Well whoopee-do. And lest anyone be taken by the narrative of ring fences, whilst Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care estimates that the new Levy will raise around £11.4 billion a year, with funds "legally ringfenced" to invest in health and social care, in the UK nothing is ever "legally ringfenced" as our constitution is built around Parliament being able to change its own laws, including the ringfences.

2. Pantomime – Not. And so it seems to have been a summer of smoke and mirrors. Or maybe pantomime is a better analogy? There's no problem with blood bottles (oh yes there is). There's no problem with flu vaccine supplies (oh yes there is, oh wait – oh no there isn't). Here at Londonwide LMCs we are doing our best to clear their smoke and doff their costumes so that you and your teams know what you are dealing with. Whether that is supporting you through a single, unified voice for general practice or updating you on the latest demands you face.

3. Abuse of our colleagues. Abuse of our profession. We are still hearing about London practice staff receiving profanity filled letters and text messages regarding vaccinations, virtual appointments, and Covid passports, as well as receiving reports of calls, emails, econsult submissions and premises vandalism. If your practice has received abuse from patients in response to texts you have been asked to send out promoting details of mass site vaccination sessions please let me know here or via Beam.

4. The Media. We remain in the eye of an anti-GP media storm. It is awful. You will, like me, have friends who now challenge you openly about face-to-face appointments and your pay, placing you in the position of having to defend what you do. This is not the result of a silly season spree by the media. It is part of a sustained denigration of our role. It's political. It's been briefed. Were that not the case we would see the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and the Chief Executive of NHSE&I publicly pushing back and supporting us and our teams. We would be seeing clear messages to the public, and we would see GP contract monies and resources directed our core services to enable GPs, nurses and admin staff to do our job properly and safely. You, we, all of us are working as hard as we can and it is unacceptable that GPs and our practice teams are being nationally scapegoated for the lack of resource and workforce in our health service.

As ever I welcome your feedback at mword@lmc.org.uk.

Keep well. Stay safe. With best wishes

Dr Michelle Drage MBBS FRCGPCEO, Londonwide LMCs