

## LMC Update Email

7 December 2018

Dear Colleagues,

### **Workload data**

NHS Digital has published an important report this week outlining workload data about GP appointments. This is the first time that such detailed information has been collected, and it provides clear evidence of the huge workload delivered by practices on a daily basis. The report provides information on the following areas:

- the number of surgery appointments, home visits, telephone and online consultations
- type of healthcare professional leading the appointment
- the number of appointments where a patient did not attend
- the time between an appointment being booked and taking place

It shows that practices in England are booking more than a million appointments a day, many of which are taking place on the telephone and that practices are using a wide range of healthcare professionals to support their work. It also shows that the largest proportion of appointments are booked and attended on the same day and the majority take place within a week of booking.

While it does not include a wide range of tasks that GPs and their teams undertake on a daily basis, such as dealing with results and prescriptions, attending meetings and engaging in teaching, learning and development, and therefore does not show the totality of practice workload, it does provide definitive data which can help to underline the need for additional investment in to general practice.

In response to the report I said: *“This new data will become an important resource, and although only providing a limited snapshot of the total work that GPs and their teams do, it now provides clear evidence of the huge amount they are doing, booking more than a million appointments a day. The largest proportion of these appointments are made and attended on the same day, and the majority of patients are seen within a week of booking – showing that, despite rising demand, that general practice is offering a high quality and timely service to patients within their community. Many other patients will be appropriately booking ahead as part of the continuity of care they receive for long-term conditions and complex problems that need regular support.”*

This was reported in a major article in The Times, as well as the [Mail](#), the [Telegraph](#) and The Sun. Read the NHS Digital report [here](#).

### **Rationing of drugs in no-deal Brexit**

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, has today written to practices to provide more information about the supply of medicines, vaccines and other items in the event of a no-deal Brexit. The letter is attached to this update. He also told the Radio 4 Today programme that he wanted to “make sure if there’s a shortage of individual drugs pharmacists can make clinical and professional judgments” and “it’s about having the appropriate clinical flexibility”. This was reported in The Times in which I said, “A consultation about something as crucial as the supply of medicines, put out with such a short timescale, is very concerning. We should have far more time to adequately consider the proposals.”

### **QOF business rules coding issues**

Following the introduction of SNOMED (a clinical terminology that standardises terminology across

different health locations) in 2018/19, NHS Digital's business rules team has been converting and mapping the READ and CTV3 codes into SNOMED, which has proved difficult and complex. Although there was always an expectation that there would be some errors as there are each year with the baseline version of QOF, a larger number than previous years have been detected:

- 85 codes have been identified and queried from the v39 baseline QOF business rules from the total of 16,000+ that QOF uses (0.5% of all the codes).
- Of these 85 queried codes 67 were incorrect and have been changed in v41 of the business rules
- Those 67 codes impact on 12 registers from the 28 in QOF

It was therefore agreed that v40, the mid-year release, would not be implemented as new errors were continuing to be reported, and that v41 would be used instead. The revised v41 business rules will be published on the [NHS Digital website](#) next week and have already been distributed to suppliers. The affected registers are: Smoking, Dementia, Epilepsy, Heart failure, Asthma, Osteoporosis, Stroke, CVD, AF and CHD.

NHS Digital has confirmed that no final QOF Payment will be affected. However, until mid-February there may be some slight errors in some reports, but practices should be able to identify which ones may be suspect by using the attached spreadsheet.

### **Prescribing of cannabis-based products**

Following the publication of England's Chief Medical Officer's [open letter](#) about prescribing of cannabis-based products, we have written to her to raise our concerns regarding the mention of shared care prescribing and the potential pressure on GPs to prescribe outside their area of competence or contractual obligations. In response to our letter she said that the current legal position is that although the law allows these to be prescribed by GPs on the direction of a specialist *'the concerns of your colleagues around potential pressures on GPs to prescribe outside of their competence or contractual obligations are entirely valid ones. Healthcare professionals should never feel pressured to prescribe. NHS England and I published a letter on cannabis-based products for medicinal use on the 31st of October which mentions that in the first instance we expect specialist prescribing only.'*

Please do let us know if you become aware of any problems by emailing [info.gpc@bma.org.uk](mailto:info.gpc@bma.org.uk). The BMA has also published some [Q&As](#) to explain what these changes mean.

### **Protein-rich diets can help frailty**

A study published in the [British Journal of General Practice](#) has found that a combination of a protein-rich diet and muscle-strengthening exercise is most effective in reversing frailty in elderly patients. The research looked at 46 earlier studies, including 15,690 patients, and found that both protein supplementation and muscle strengthening produced most effective outcomes. In response to this my comments were reported in [The Sun](#), when I said, "Patients who are frail will benefit from muscle strengthening through exercise and a focus on diet can help to reduce malnutrition, which can lead to more vulnerability for other illness. GPs take all appropriate opportunities to discuss these issues with their patients but what is often needed is improved access to suitable support services for patients to be referred to."

### **NHS pension delays**

[BBC Radio 4's You and Yours](#) (12.30pm) reported on delays with NHS pension payments, focusing on the case of two GPs. The first retired in February but had not received any payments, only doing so once the BBC started making enquiries. Similarly, payments to the family of a second GP, who died

earlier this year, only started going out once the BBC got in touch. I was interviewed on the subject, telling the programme that the situation was completely unacceptable and a “symptom of a wider problem with the pensions arrangements for the NHS and certainly for GPs”. lmc

### **RCGP survey highlights pressures on general practice**

The BMA’s response to a survey published by the RCGP, which highlights the pressures on general practice with nearly a third saying they are unlikely to be working in general practice in five years’ time, was featured in [Pulse](#) and [OnMedica](#). In response to this, I said: “For the last 70 years general practice has been the foundation on which the NHS is built, but without proper support, investment and a plan to tackle the current retention crisis, it is in serious risks of crumbling. The BMA is therefore urging the government, using its long-term plan, to drastically increase the share of the NHS budget that general practice receives to guarantee its ability to continue to provide high-quality, person-based care from within the community for years to come.”

You can read the BMA’s full response [here](#). I was also interviewed on [BBC Radio Essex](#) on Monday evening [at 6m20s].

### **NHS Long Term Plan briefing**

NHS England has published the attached briefing on the NHS Long Term Plan to update on the progress so far and the next steps after publication, as well as some of the policy announcements that have already been made.

### **Scottish LMC Conference**

The annual meeting of LMCs in Scotland was held last week on the 30 November in Glasgow. The resolutions and minutes are available on [this webpage](#).

### **Junior members forum 2019**

Registration is now open for the BMA junior members forum 2019. The JMF is a free 2-day conference, open to all members within 12 years of GMC registration. A certain number of places are reserved for GPs and GP trainees.

JMF 2019 is taking place from 26-27 January 2019 in Brighton. To find out more and register, click [here](#). If you have any questions, please contact [dnorcliffe-brown@bma.org.uk](mailto:dnorcliffe-brown@bma.org.uk).

Read the latest GPC UK newsletter [here](#)

Have a good weekend.

Richard