

WORCESTERSHIRE LMC

NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2006 EDITION

OUR NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS - www.worcslmc.co.uk

We hope you will start to look at our new website. Considerable amount of effort has gone into setting this up and we hope you will find it a useful and clear site to access information you need. It will be regularly updated and include links to all sorts of helpful documents. We are currently putting together a package of advice sheets and standard letters that we think practices will find useful. They should be on the website in the next few weeks once the committee has reviewed them. We always welcome feedback; please let us know what you think. If you haven't sent in your email address please do as we are trying to send out more information rapidly to practices by email. Please contact the LMC office with your details.

PMS EMPLOYERS SUPERANNUATION CONTRIBUTIONS

Further to our last newsletter we now understand that a Cumbria practice asked their PCT for the additional payments and was turned down. Eventually they applied to the FHS Appeal Unit and won their case. (www.fhsaa.nhs.uk Decision - 11865 October 2005). We believe this strengthens our case and we will convey this information to the PCT's. Check the wording of your own PMS Contract and the variance document. For further advice contact the LMC. Send an invoice as soon as your accountant can provide the figures.

VAT

There is considerable anxiety relating to lack of information on changes to the VAT regulations. We understand that dispensing practices will need to become VAT registered and we are pressing the GPC for more information for them. There are mixed messages about the significance of this for them. There is also concern that VAT registration may be required for larger practices earning more than £60,000 a year from non NHS work such as insurance reports etc. Again, more clarification is needed and we have asked the GPC for this. As soon as this information is available we will pass it onto you.

PCT REORGANISATION

From discussions recently with a number of people it is clear that the current state of the NHS is the most confused and disorganised for many years! The PCT reorganisation has as predicted caused planning blight and key personnel are currently leaving. We always predicted this would happen and are dismayed once again to have been proved right. Interestingly the House of Commons Select Committee savaged the Governments proposals for reorganisation and this has thrown further doubt over the whole process. Currently we

are in the consultation process for the merger of our three PCTs although this is really the only option on the table. We are led to believe, however, that significant objections to this are now being raised and this potentially could alter the outcome. Nevertheless the LMC has had meetings recently with two of the three PCTs and also with Mr Tennant who is in charge of the Strategic Health Authority Project Board looking at the merger. The LMC has put to him a list of issues that we feel need to be dealt with and also various suggestions as to how the LMC and the new PCT should work better. We want to learn from the last few years and make things more effective in this county. However, the latest message is that the PCT merger may not take place by July but could be delayed until October. That lengthens the period of disorganisation further and cannot be good for anybody.

One of the key issues for the new PCT is the roll out of Practice Based Commissioning. We have had discussions with Mr Tennant on this issue and have stressed the need for a county wide discussion. The LMC was therefore dismayed to find that a county wide PBC group has been formed and that no GPs are on the group and the LMC has not even been informed of its existence! The departmental guidance was due out before Christmas and this was then put back until January and now we are told that there are further delays. The Direct Enhanced Service for PBC has not been formally confirmed in detail either. What we have seen so far does not seem to offer very much to encourage GPs to take on Practice Based Commissioning. The LMCs view is that if it becomes an inevitability then we need to work together to make the best of a bad deal for Worcestershire, for the practices and for our patients.

EUROPEAN BLUE BADGES

We hope this issue is now sorted! We thought it might be helpful if practices are approached by patients seeking information that they are referred back to the Social Services Customer Service Centre. GPs may find it useful to have sight of the letter from the Director of Adult and Community Services; we will put this on our website for your information.

HEP B IMMUNISATION MEDICAL SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

This remains a difficult issue complicated by a delay in the publication of formal guidance from the Department of Health and the Council of Heads of Medical Schools. The universities have maintained that any registered students are entitled to access to university- run occupational health services. The GPC maintains that GPs are under no obligation to provide Hep B immunisation for occupational health reasons. In future Occupational Health checks may occur post admission to medical school which would obviate the request to GPs for immunisation. This is because the GMC does not require completion of expose prone procedures for students to reach full registration and CHMS has therefore recognised that freedom from blood borne infections does not prohibit completion of a medical degree. Unfortunately guidance to medical schools on how and

when occupational health checks will occur in future has been delayed until the Department of Health issues final guidance. The BMA recently reissued guidance and this can be found at:

[http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/PDFHepBimmunisationforemployeesatri sk/\\$FILE/HepBNov05.pdf](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/AttachmentsByTitle/PDFHepBimmunisationforemployeesatri sk/$FILE/HepBNov05.pdf)

GPC ELECTIONS

The elections for a delegate for the constituency that includes Worcestershire will take place later this year. Our constituency is Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Coventry. If anybody is interested in applying they should contact the LMC office as soon as possible. Closure date for applications is the middle of February. The office has full details on request.

ANNUAL CERTIFICATE OF PENSIONABLE EARNINGS

This information was recently sent to us from the GPC:

Following the difficulties experienced by many practices in completing the annual certificate of pensionable earnings, compounded by the ruling by HMRC that the employers' contributions for GP partners may not be tax deductible, a way forward has now been found, for this financial year, at least. The form has been revised and having agreed to the amendments, it is now available on the NHS Pensions Agency website at www.nhspa.gov.uk/GPCompletionForms.cfm. The form includes a 'represcription notice' from HMRC to place at the back of the note for all accountants, GPs and local tax officers to see and thus avoid possible arguments.

What has been agreed is that although, at the moment, the employers' contributions for partners have to be shown in GP accounts and hence as income, they will be fully tax allowable even though to be so they breach the £15,000 limit. The only additional payment that GPs will have to make is for National Insurance payments on the employers' contributions which will, on average be about £140 per GP. For those certificates that have already been completed with deductions, they will still be correct for pension purposes and will not necessarily need to be re-visited.

This solution subsequently means that the problems for 2004-05 and 2005-06 have been resolved. However, we have agreed this solution for one year only, due to the urgency with which GPs need to complete this year's returns. We are continuing to try to get agreement for subsequent years so that there will be no additional NI payments for GPs, an approach that the Department of Health supports.

FLU PANDEMIC PLANNING

We are beginning to receive some information on this issue. We will be including a section on our website with useful documents as and when they become available. The LMC is continuing to press for appropriate training for practices as a matter of urgency.

GP TRAINERS - £750 CPD PAYMENT

Lord Warner has confirmed to the GPC that allocations will be made to Strategic Health Authorities in January 2006 and by late February all GP trainers should have received the payment that was included in the 2005-2006 Review Body Award. Please will any trainers who have not received this money inform the LMC.

REFERRAL MANAGEMENT

The GPC has recently received a number of queries about Referral Management Centres including comments from this LMC. Issues regard confidentiality and PCT interference from the referral process. The GPC has worked with the Medical Defence organisations and the MDU and has developed a paper addressing the most frequently asked questions and containing advice. There is suggested information for patients and a model letter for GPs who have had referrals delayed or returned by Referral Management Centres. This is being reviewed by the GPC and will be circulated to LMCs shortly. As soon as it is available we will put this on our website.

PATIENT CHOICE

No doubt early in the New Year you heard Patricia Hewitt's announcement that 'choice is now a reality in the NHS'. Like all GPs the LMC thought this was a great deal of spin, and fuss and nonsense over something that we have always done. The BMA is particularly concerned that although choice is being promoted in reality restrictions are taking place on referrals. The LMC has been asked to forward onto the BMA any examples that GPs have on referrals being blocked by either PCTs or Acute Trusts. Some of you may have been unhappy about press releases that PCTs put out promoting the new Choice scheme. We understand that this was a centrally produced press release and all PCTs were asked to endorse it. Obviously choice doesn't really apply to PCT managers! They were told what to say.

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**THIS NEWLETTER IS PRODUCED FROM THE LMC OFFICE AT
ST STEPHENS SURGERY**

The next LMC meeting will be 9 February 2006