

Patient Experience Survey

Some practices will have seen significant QOF point deductions for failure to meet the thresholds in QOF indicators PE7 and PE8. These points are based on the answers that patients gave in the National Patient Experience Questionnaire to the questions on booking appointments within 48 hours and booking appointments in advance.

We are told that the questionnaire sample sizes were designed to provide statistically significant results but that the calculation of sample size was based on the response rate to the previous national experience questionnaire. The most recent patient experience questionnaire contained very many more questions than the previous ones had and it seems as if many patients did not answer all the questions. This means that the response rate to the questions that determine PE7 and PE8 may be so low as to be unrepresentative.

If you feel that your results on PE7 and PE8 do not reflect the reality of what you offer to patients, we advise that you put in a QOF appeal to the PCT. We understand that the GPC will very shortly provide a template letter for this so that you can be sure that the wording you use is legally watertight. We will advise you as soon as this template is available on the GPC website.

You can sign off the rest of your QOF achievement so long as you say that PE7 and PE8 are subject to appeal.

GPC Annual Report

The GPC annual report for 2009 is now on the BMA website and both the full report and executive summary can be accessed at: http://www.bma.org.uk/about_bma/annual_reports/gpcannreport09.jsp.

This year's Conference of LMCs will take place on 11 and 12 June. Derbyshire's representatives will be Drs John Ashcroft, John Grenville, Sean King and Rachel Tinker.

Pandemic flu latest

There is no specific new action that practices need to take. Stay alert, keep your level of preparedness high and check the HPA website daily <http://www.hpa.org.uk/>

There is a new daytime number for health professionals to ring if they suspect a case of swine flu. The number is 0845 425 1756. This line covers the whole of the East Midlands, 0900-1800 seven days a week. Outside these hours call the local Health Protection Unit number 01623 819 000.

Please do not give these numbers to patients; they should be advised to telephone the National Flu Information Line which is 0800 1 513 513.

All practice staff will need to be issued with photo ID cards that include their role. The PCTs will organise this but it would be very helpful if every practice could ensure that it has an electronic photo library of all members of staff who do not have a smart card (staff members who have a smart card will have their photographs held on file at Derwent Health Informatics Service).

The current situation is that the number of swine flu cases continues to rise globally (about 13,500 confirmed cases, mostly in Mexico and the USA) and the number of confirmed cases in the UK also continues to rise slowly (about 200 confirmed cases). The illness seems to be more highly transmissible than seasonal flu but no more serious in terms of morbidity and mortality. The vast majority of those who have died have had serious underlying co-morbidities.

Irrelevant information in GP referrals

It has been brought to our notice that some GPs are including irrelevant information with their referrals. In one recent example a fairly brief referral letter was accompanied by over 40 pages of "summary", which was probably the whole of the patient's computer record. Excess information irrelevant to the referral is time-consuming for the consultant and could expose the GP to a complaint or PCT clinical governance interest.

Complaints Procedures

Action points

- New procedure starts on 1st April 2009
- Appoint a complaints manager and a GP partner as a "responsible person"
- Publish the complaints procedure in the practice
- Record all oral complaints
- Acknowledge receipt of all complaints in 3 working days (can be done by telephone)
- Discuss with complainant (if s/he agreeable) how the complaint will be dealt with and what the desired outcomes are
- Follow guidance on timescales
- Monitor and record all complaints
- Produce an annual report (due end of March 2010)

How the new procedure differs from the old one -

It is not a requirement for practices to copy complaints to the PCT, so there is increased expectation that practices deal with complaints internally. Under the new procedure, oral complaints made to the practice do not have to be dealt with under the legislation if they are resolved to the patient's satisfaction by the end of the next working day.

Practices now must acknowledge the receipt a complaint within three days. However, there is no allotted timescale for resolution, as it is accepted that the requirements will differ from case to case.

The complaints manager role has been retained. This person, who is responsible for handling and considering complaints in line with the regulations, does not necessarily have to be a practice employee and can perform this role for more than one practice in the vicinity.

People wishing to complain may choose to make their complaint orally, in writing or electronically to the PCT rather than the practice. They may make their complaints within 12 months of an incident happening or of becoming aware of the problem.

Complaints involving locum GPs

In order to account for complaints involving locum GPs, it is necessary for practices to seek an agreement from locums that they will participate in the complaints procedure if required to do so. As complaints can be made to the practice up to a year after the reason for the complaint, it is possible that complaints will arise where the locum GP has moved on.

Practices should ensure that locums involved in the complaints process are given every opportunity to respond to complaints and it is important that there is no discrepancy between the way the process treats locums, salaried GPs or GP partners.

This does not apply to out-of-hours organisations.

Annual Report

Practices will be required to produce an annual report

as soon as practicable after the 31st March for the preceding 12 months including:

- number of complaints received
- number of complaints that were shown to be well founded
- the number of complaints that the practice has been informed have been passed to the Ombudsman
- a summary of the subject matter of complaints
- any matters of general importance arising
- way in which complaints were handled
- the issues they raise, and any matters where action has been taken or is to be taken to improve services as a consequence of those complaints.
- this report to be sent to PCT and produced for any person on request.

Vaccine cold chain

With the potential for pandemic flu vaccine as well as seasonal flu vaccine next winter now would be a good time to look at vaccine storage. We urge all practices to ensure that they have dedicated vaccine fridges, which are compliant with current standards, that they record the maximum and minimum temperatures in those fridges and, most importantly, that they act on any readings outside the recommended ranges. It is also important to have in place a system that ensures that vaccines are used in the correct order of their dates of expiry and that existing stocks of vaccine are not simply pushed to the back of the fridge when new stocks with a later expiry date are received.

Latest advice

In the past month GPC has issued the following:

Patient Survey 2009 – background information

Patient Survey 2009 – letter to practices

Further details are available on application to the LMC office or on the BMA website www.bma.org.uk

How to contact us

Derby & Derbyshire LMC Ltd office is at Norman House, Friar Gate, Derby DE1 1NU. Our telephone number is 01332 210008, fax 01332 341771. Our email address is now office@derbyshirelmc.co.uk. The two Practice/PCT Liaison Officers are Melanie Beatham and Kate Lawrence who will continue to liaise with the same North and Southern practices as before the PCT reorganisation. Their email addresses are: melanie.beatham@derbyshirelmc.co.uk and kate.lawrence@derbyshirelmc.co.uk.