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GPC backs new GP Practice Workload Survey

Family doctors and health teams at around 4,000 GP Practices across the UK are being encouraged to take part in a groundbreaking survey which will give them the opportunity to document the way their practice works.

The survey, to be carried out by the Information Centre for Health and Social Care's Technical Steering Committee on behalf of the British Medical Association (BMA), NHS Employers and the Department of Health, will include the work of the whole practice, including GPs, nurses, physiotherapists, managers, community nurses, receptionists and other support staff. The previous workload survey, which took place in 1992, covered the work of GPs only.

The survey will take place in two phases in September and December and aims to collect information on the distribution of work for all the different groups of staff in general practice. Participating staff will be asked to complete a short questionnaire and a diary sheet to record the amounts of time spent on different activities at the practice for a one week period.

Professor Denise Lievesley, Chief Executive of the Information Centre said, "We need as many as possible of the invited practices to respond, so we obtain representative information on the distribution of workload in today's practices. She continued, "The decision to cover all staff working in general practice recognises the valuable contribution made by the different categories of staff."

Dr Hamish Meldrum, GPC Chairman commented: "As part of the new contract agreement, we committed ourselves to monitor practice workload to help us ensure that resources kept pace with any changes. This survey is an important element of that work and I hope that practices will take the time and effort to participate in the survey. "

Phillip Grant, GMS negotiator for NHS Employers said: "This is an excellent opportunity for us to understand the increase in skill mix in general practice and the changing roles of primary care professionals. The results will give us a snapshot of what's going on in general practice at this moment in time which we can use to inform our discussions with the BMA."

Sandy Gower, managing partner of an 18,000 practice in Hemel Hempstead and Companion of the Institute of Healthcare Management, recently participated in the pilot survey and said, "It is important to understand the different elements of a practice's workload and this survey provides information for the first time, at both a

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practice and individual level.” She continued, “The evidence provided will be incredibly helpful in facilitating potential change, providing different support to the practice team and continuing to deliver effective patient services”

Notes to editors

Letters will be sent to practices inviting them to participate in the survey in August and the questionnaires and diary sheets will be sent to selected practices in the UK in September and December, by post or email.

The Information Centre is a special health authority, working to make information more relevant and accessible - to the public, regulators, health and social care professionals and policy makers, leading to improvements in knowledge and efficiency. We are also streamlining data collections to reduce the burden on frontline staff, releasing more time for direct care.

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