

Chief Officer's Corner — personal message from Peter

"It is now three weeks since the last of my saphenous vein grafts gave up the ghost and put me back into CCU at the RD&E under the care of (now) three cardiologists! This time I appear to have done rather more damage than in the past but "the pump" is still working (ejection fraction 42%) although the electrics (LBBB) are a little scrambled!! The good news is that the combined efforts of my GP and I have reduced my cholesterol towards USA target levels and there has been some plaque regression in particular in my Rt Coronary artery and there is now only one moderate stenosis very distally. I have been undergoing radio nuclide scans to see if there is any significant continuing ischaemia before making any decisions as to future therapy, and indeed I am looking forward to a standard exercise test this afternoon to see if I get any pain on real exercise! I will share more information as I get it.

I would like to thank all those who have sent cards, letters and other messages including those with flowers or fruit. The messages have been very supportive and the flowers and fruit have been beautiful and tasty respectively! I would also like to thank all those who are keeping on providing a full service to you all as the secretariat is a genuine team affair rather than a one-man band. This has become increasingly so over the years and thank heaven for it! Cheerio for now."

Peter OK time for a nap now to get ready for this afternoon. Bye.



Dr John Dean, Devon LMCs Medical Secretary

A guideline safety warning...

It cannot have escaped your notice that we are receiving rather a lot of unsolicited guidelines, guidance documents and protocols. Most of these documents are extremely helpful as guides for conscientious GPs trying to do their best for their patients and to practice "good medicine".

Let's take two examples that have recently crossed a Devon GP's desk.

- The National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease recommends that we actively intervene, perhaps with lipid-lowering agents, only when there is a 30% or greater ten-year risk of a patient having a myocardial infarction or coronary death. Because the Department of Health publishes this document, GPs might feel that they are on safe ground in sticking rigidly to this recommendation. They might even feel that there is some sort of quasi-legal authority to it, because of its source. However, it has yet to be tested in court whether it is legally acceptable to withhold readily available risk-reducing treatment from a patient that is known to have, say, a 1 in 4 chance of having such an event in the next ten years.

- A recently distributed local formulary consultation document suggests that Ibuprofen and Indomethacin are the NSAIDs of choice for first-line use, Naproxen and Diclofenac for second-line use, Etodolac and Nabumetone for hospital initiation only, and Rofecoxib and Celecoxib for hospital prescription only. A patient is prescribed Indomethacin and has a fatal, massive upper GI bleed. Is the simple fact that this drug is recommended as a first-line therapy in a local formulary an adequate justification for not prescribing an alternative NSAID that causes fewer GI side effects in good-quality clinical trials? The courts will ultimately decide. In the interim, will every patient with a history of dyspepsia be referred to a Rheumatologist for long-term repeat prescriptions of their Cox 2 inhibitor?

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It is essential that all GPs understand that blindly following these documents, even if they originate from

a highly respected authority, will not necessarily provide an adequate defence against accusations of negligence or malpractice. Equally, deviation from such documents will not necessarily result in an indefensible position.

Without advocating widespread departures from the various guidance documents, it is important that each patient be assessed and treated as an individual, on the merits of their individual circumstances. Courts expect physicians to exercise “clinical judgement” when applying protocols, guidelines and guidance documents.

The validity of the much-quoted “Bolam principle”, which states that “a doctor will not be guilty of negligence if he has acted in accordance with a practice accepted as proper by a responsible body of men skilled in that particular art”¹, is being increasingly questioned by UK Courts. Just because a distinguished panel of medical experts decide that a course of action is best, that fact does not necessarily absolve the individual GP of responsibility for harm caused to a patient by following their “expert” guidance.

The GP’s life is not an easy one.

¹ *Bolam v Friern Hospital Management Committee (1957) 2 All ER: 118-128 at 122*

National Clinical Assessment Authority

I am pleased to announce that Adrian Jacobs has been invited to serve as a non-executive member of the Clinical Assessment Authority for the next three years. This is a new Authority, which has been established by Government that will work to help find solutions to the problems associated with under-performing doctors.

PART-TIME SECRETARIAL/ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Professional organisation in Sowton area working with GPs and Pharmacists requires Part-time Assistant (initially 20 hours per week) to work in a small, busy office. The postholder will provide secretarial and administrative support to the Management Team. The successful candidate will be competent in Microsoft Office, have excellent audio skills and a confident telephone manner. A good standard of written and spoken English, good organisational skills and the ability to work on your own initiative are key qualities. To start as soon as possible.

Salary range: £10,500 – £11,500 pro-rata according to experience.

Apply in writing with a full CV and covering letter to
Devon LMCs, Ambassador House, Ambassador Drive,
Exeter Business Park, EXETER EX1 3QN

Closing date for applications: **Wednesday 9 May**

Interviews will be held on: **Friday 18 May**

The Secretariat Office is a non-smoking environment.

If you have not heard from us within 6 weeks,
please assume that you have been unsuccessful.

West Country Ambulance Service (WAST)

The following points were raised at the recent WAST Liaison Meeting on 4 May:

SWELLS – Mr Richard Cockin, Community Resuscitation Officer, who works with GP practices, is happy to be contacted regarding any matters to do with SWELLS. Tel: 01392 261500.

NHS DIRECT – Any feedback from GPs on problems is always welcome and considered “professional feedback” and should be directed to either Graham Smart or Norma Lane – Tel: 01392 441200. However, if the complaint is put in writing then this is considered a formal complaint. If patients complain then that is automatically considered as a formal complaint.

Skin Information Day

Phoenix Arts Centre, Exeter, Saturday 16 June 2001

Skin Information Days are organised by the Skin Care Campaign and run from 10.00am until 3.00pm. The Days are open to the general public and healthcare professionals and attendance figures are in the region of 300-plus.



*Skin
Care
Campaign*

The Skin Information Days aim to enable people to learn more about their skin, improve understanding, management and coping skills. The events are open to anyone, whether they have a skin condition themselves or are a carer, family member or have a professional interest.

The Days feature:

- **Exhibitions of helpful products and services.** As well as representatives from many patient support groups, these also include a wide range of pharmaceutical and healthcare companies who can talk to visitors about their products, different ways of managing their skin condition and offer samples to try at home.
- **A full programme of talks** which are informal sessions led by health professionals and focus on all the major skin conditions, such as acne, eczema, herpes viruses, psoriasis, Raynaud's & scleroderma, rosacea, vitiligo and many others, and their treatment. These presentations run for 45 minutes, including time for questions and answers, and are open to all.

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For further information please contact Gwen Banford - Tel: 0207 281 3553 ext.210 or Rosemary Humphreys Tel: 01395 442808

Devon Medical Sailing Rally Saturday June 16th 2001 at The Royal Dart Yacht Club, Kingswear.

Do you have a sailing boat? Or do you know anyone who does?
Join us for a ploughman's lunch followed by a leisurely sail
(masquerading as a race) off Dartmouth.
Suitable for all types of sailing boat from cruiser/racers to dinghies,
bilge keelers and gaffers.
Followed by evening meal. Profits to RNLI.
For details and application forms contact
Norman Doidge at Albany Surgery, Albany Street,
Newton Abbot
(01 626 33 44 11 or 01 626 364 333)
or by e-mail norman@ndoidge.freeserve.co.uk.



Comings & Goings April 2001

Welcome to:	Goodbye to:
Dr Lorraine Hill, St Lukes Medical Practice, Brixham Dr Richard Cullen, The Warwick Practice, Ilfracombe Dr David Rampersad, Honiton Surgery Dr Simon Johnson-Ferguson, Castle Place Surgery, Tiverton Dr Roger Bramley, Seaton & Colyton Medical Centre Dr Maria Mastrantonio, Waterside Primary Care, Ilfracombe Dr Helen Frow, Torrington Health Centre	Dr Brian Steggle, Wharfside Surgery, Tavistock Dr Stanislaus Hill, Bideford Medical Centre Dr Bettina James, Croft Hall Medical Practice, Torquay Dr Susan Langley, St Lukes Medical Practice, Brixham Dr David Langley, St Lukes Medical Practice, Brixham Dr Benedict Armstrong, Torrington Health Centre Dr David Dodds, The Warwick Practice, Ilfracombe Dr Alan Ward, Honiton Surgery Dr Robert Rowland, Norton Brook Medical Centre, Kingsbridge Dr Sheila Gould, Croft Hall Medical Practice, Torquay

ADVERT

Experienced Health Psychologist – Seeking new clients. *Full mental health and well being assessments. Train in Psychotherapeutic techniques; Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; Problem-solving Techniques; Client centred and Task orientated counselling.*

Based in Plymouth but will travel within reasonable distances.

References available. Contact:

Amberley Meredith B.Sc.M.Sc.

Barbican House

36 New Street

Plymouth PL1 2NA

Tel: 01752 300100

Mobile: 07899 956357

E-mail: afro@melon-45.freeseerve.co.uk

GP Retainer Required ASAP

For 2 – 4 Sessions per week for
Torrington Health Centre, North Devon

We are a busy 4-partner practice and have an
Immediate vacancy to replace our existing
retainer who

Has now obtained a partnership.

For discussion and details please contact the
Practice Manager, Mr Brian Butland

Tel: 01805 622247

Corner Place Surgery

46A Dartmouth Road

Paignton, Devon, TQ4 5AH

Telephone 01803 557458 Fax 01803 524844

RETAINER REQUIRED

3 Sessions per week

We are a 6.75 partner practice seeking
someone to join our friendly and supportive
team. PMS practice with 11,600 patients.

For further details or an application form
please phone our Practice Manager
Brenda van den Berg on 01803 557458
(ext. 235)

Practice Manager Required

for Barton Surgery, Plymstock, Plymouth

Experienced Practice Manager required for this
3-partner practice. Hours negotiable.

Please apply in writing only with CV to:

Mrs J Chapman, Practice Manager
Barton Surgery, Horn Lane
Plymstock Plymouth PL9 9BR

**REDFERN HEALTH CENTRE
SALCOMBE****Enthusiastic Replacement
Partner**

required for a friendly 4-partner practice.

Excellent premises recently extended.
Happy PHCT providing comprehensive services and
meeting all higher targets.

Computerised (EMIS). Cottage Hospital with
admitting rights. Out-of-Hours local Co-op.
For an informal discussion contact Sue Sharp,
Practice Manager Tel: 01548 842284
or forward handwritten application, CV and 3
referees to

Redfern Health Centre, Shadycombe Road,
Salcombe TQ8 8DJ

**Part-time
CLINICAL DATA PROJECT
WORKER**

(Hours variable, by arrangement, up to three
days/week).

Dr Ashworth & Partners
Cricketfield Surgery, Cricketfield Road
Newton Abbot TQ12 2AS

The successful applicant will have some knowledge
of READ coding within the NHS, be
self-motivated and able to work without supervision
to ensure the practice meets Government Clinical
Governance targets.

All candidates must have a good general standard of
education, good interpersonal skills and have
previously worked with computers.

For an application form and job description please
call into the surgery or telephone 01626 208020

Back Bytes – Office Manager’s Mutterings

Office Expansion

In the absence of Peter I thought I would explain what has been happening in the secretariat office. The secretariat office has recently been expanded to incorporate administrative support for the Devon Local Pharmaceutical Committee (LPC). This is a new organisation, which has been made from the amalgamation of resources from the LPCs from the South and the North and East. This means that the LPC, whilst remaining totally independent and a separate organisation, can utilise some of the existing skills and resources available within the office and also contribute financially to reduce the overall operational costs.

What does it mean to you our members and constituents? Well, we are in the process of sourcing and appointing a new administrator to enhance our combined team (see the advert section). The new team member will work partly for the LPC Chief Officer and partly for the LMC. It is proposed that the new person will give some extra flexibility within our staffing, whilst being able to improve and develop our services. This will have no financial implication on our members; however, it should significantly enhance the levels of service we are able to provide.

This secretarial support is on a six-month trial basis and I will report back on how the situation develops. I would like to welcome Mrs Sue Taylor as the newly appointed LPC Chief Officer onto the team. GOOD LUCK...

Normal service will be resumed as soon as possible...

As explained elsewhere, Peter is currently away on sick leave and I would like to take this opportunity to wish him well, whilst also apologising to you, our members, for any disruptions and delays in our normal standard of service. The team has tried, where possible, to delegate the more complex work to Chairmen, LMC members and other agencies as appropriate. The vast majority of routine work has continued and is being done by the office team. I personally regret any delays in responding to individual requests, all I can say is we will get there!

Conference 2001

It is coming to that time of year when we send a group of experienced “wordsmiths” off to the Annual LMC Conference, to present what is concerning and causing problems within general practice in Devon. This is a very important event as the motions discussed and agreed form the basis of the GPC negotiating position for the next twelve months. After a brief excursion up North to Manchester last year, the event is now back in London and will be held on the 20 & 21 June. This year the speakers will be Drs Charlie Daniels, Dick Page, Andy Paton, Preston de Mendonca, Jack Shelley, Mark Wood and Adrian Midgley and these will be supported by Drs Andrew Richardson, Gary Tudor, John Ackroyd, Steve Hunt and myself who go as observers. I am pleased to announce that Dr Adrian Jacobs has agreed to attend as an “honorary” observer. For those interested, a full set of motions is posted on the ever popular LMC website www.devonlmc.org - for information we recorded a massive 3,540 hits in March....

Fat-Free Easter Eggs

Easter is traditionally a time when we think of bunnies, chocolate, gardening, home-improvements, etc. So being concerned about the excessive consumption of chocolate in Devon, I thought I would do a section on Easter Eggs. Unfortunately this is not the edible variety, but concerning those “fun” bits of computer code that are included in your software and which you probably didn’t know were there!



What am I on about? Eggs in software programmes are known to date back to the 1970s when they first appeared in certain Unix command line utilities. When started with a particular command line parameter, the given programme would display text greetings or other messages. Things got bigger and much better with the advent of Windows in the 90s, as programmers were able to display Easter eggs with pictures and sounds making use of the multimedia capabilities of the Windows platform. Those in the know have been wandering in the “Hall of the Tortured Souls, Doom Style!” which was hidden in Excel 95, or the more recent “Spy Hunter” a very complex full multi-media driving game in Excel 2000 or even the infamous “Pinball Game” contained in Word 97 – how much space these take, no-one knows, or the amount of time taken to construct!

Another variation on the Egg comes in the form of cheats. I thought I would share two of them with you, the first is for that highly popular lunchtime waster, Microsoft Minesweeper - whilst playing the game press both mouse buttons and press the **esc** key – this will freeze the clock. The second is for that other Microsoft Classic, FreeCell – start a new game and press **Ctrl, Shift** and **F10** – a pop-up menu then gives you the option of win or lose! You must play a card after the cheat – Have fun!

Those of you looking to develop this new interest may want to visit - www.eggheaven2000.com - that lists 100s of the things...

Conferences, Courses and Information

PUBLIC HEALTH THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

How Health Partnerships are tackling health inequalities

Friday, 1st June 2001 - Cardiff

The aims of the Conference are to identify the determinants of effective partnership working for reducing inequalities in health; to examine examples of partnerships from around the UK and to identify transferable components; to identify action that needs to be taken to improve effectiveness of partnership working and of health inequalities reduction strategies and to assist the sponsoring organisations in their policy development.

Intended participants: Members and staff of Health Authorities and NHS Trusts, Local Health Groups, Public and Voluntary organisations, local councillors, local government staff, Community Health Council members and staff academics and researchers

Details from Martin Rathfelder, Socialist Health Association, 22 Blair Road, Manchester M16 8NS. Tel:0161 286 1926 or 0161 248 1872. Email: weasel@cwcom.net

University of Birmingham – October 2001

Recruitment is now taking place for MSc/Diploma programmes in Health Care Policy and Management, Managing Quality in Health Care, Primary Health Care Policy and Management, and Health Economics and Health Policy.

General Enquiries about Graduate Programmes please contact the Graduate Office Tel: 0121 4143174.

Primary Care in the 'new' NHS: the death of General Practice?

HSMC's annual primary care conference – 26 June 2001

Venue: Botanical Gardens, Birmingham

Enquiries to: HSMC Tel: 0121 4147050

GateHouse -

Training and Development Courses are being run from May – October 2001. Further information can be obtained from GateHouse Tel: 020 7420 3500.

Email: gatehouse@butterworths.com

Nursing and Clinical Governance 27 November

The Government is setting a new agenda for NHS Trusts and the professions. Accountability to the public will offer fresh challenges to all nurses.

Demystifying the NHS Policy Agenda for Specialist Registrars - 15 May. 19 June. 10 July.

A seminar to explore the issue of Government changes to the NHS which are all set to make the job of newly appointed consultants more complex.

An Introduction to Involving Service-Users in the Planning, Implementation, Managing and Monitoring of Mental Health Services - 10 May. 12 July. 17 September.

A one-day introductory workshop for mental health service professionals aimed at promoting the involvement and empowerment of service-users to improve the quality and efficiency of mental health services.