

## CHIEF OFFICER'S CORNER

### The End of Primary Care Groups?

The Secretariat has completed the third ballot in Devon regarding the movement of a PCG to Trust status. Teignbridge GPs have voted supporting such a move to Level 4 in April 2001 with 54.17% of those entitled to vote saying "Yes" which equates to 67.24% of those who voted. The turnout was

80.56% (full details later). We will be running ballots for Plymouth and the 4 PCGs in North & East Devon in the next few weeks and I think it likely that Trust status will cover all Devon next year. I hope that the new Trusts will build on the experiences gained at some expense by those working in PCGs and not attempt to start yet again from a fresh sheet of paper. I hope that those who have been involved in PCGs will retain their enthusiasm and drive as their responsibilities become greater in PCTs. I hope that those GP members will continue to be able to provide high quality Primary Care Services to their patients on a personal basis. Effectively, I hope that those of you reading this who are intimately involved will keep healthy and sane and remain focused in your Primary Care roots! Remember, if the stresses and strains become too much the LMCs (established in 1911!) will still be around to help you when PCTs have metamorphosed into yet another organisational creature!

### Verification of Death

Over the last year, the LMC has been co-ordinating a working group drawn from both LMCs, Devon Doctors on Call and the Nursing Homes Registrations and Inspection Units of both Health Authorities, looking at this vexed question. Previous guidance issued reflecting the GPC paper on GPs' statutory obligations regarding the death of patients was accurate but, at times, perhaps a little lacking in empathy. This was brought to my attention by Mr Richard van Oppen, Coroner for the County of Devon, that conflicts had occurred between GPs, Nursing Home Managers and even with Funeral Directors! We have recently agreed a pan Devon policy on this which will be distributed to all GPs, Nursing Homes and

Funeral Directors once the final Is have been dotted and Ts crossed! I believe the policy is a sensible compromise between legal responsibilities and ethical and humane ones and commend it to you.

### Data Protection Act 1998

The saga continues and hopefully the national negotiators are making headway. In any event, this Act is causing chaos in many practices and every day we are fielding queries on it. Many relate to a national leader in personal injury work (Personal Injury Medical Services Ltd) and I am in the process of negotiations with them as to how they should work with GPs in Devon, what they should request and how that will be paid for. As they deal with some 300,000 cases each year I hope it will be worth the time and effort! We are having relatively few problems with Devon solicitors. However, that is not the case throughout the country and to this end I hope to be able to agree with the Medico-Legal Liaison Committee a proforma letter to be sent to "furriners" (imagine a Devon accent) who write requesting complete copies of patient notes. This is the area that is giving the most concern and causing the most heartache in practices. I think it possible that a Devon practice could be the first to test the "disproportionate effort" exclusion clause in the DPA 98 but I would rather that somebody else takes this on if possible.

### Flu Immunisation

You will all have noticed the change in national policy on this following the alleged "epidemic" last winter! Whether there was an epidemic or not the future arrangements appear sensible, although there might not be enough vaccine available this year to achieve the aims. Essentially, the existing target population of those with chronic heart, respiratory and renal disease and diabetics, and those suffering from immunosuppression, the over-75s and those in long stay residential and nursing homes remain the group most at risk. However, to that group have been added all those over 65 and under 74 which effectively doubles the group at risk because of their age.

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For this year the GPC have agreed additional fees at the B Rate for all patients over 65 years who are immunised. In addition, you will be able to claim under the Personally Administer Items Scheme all the vaccine you supplied to them but that will be the only source of income for those under 65 years. This payment is due for review for future years.

There remains little evidence to show that the routine immunisation of all health workers would be

of benefit but guidance on winter planning suggests that NHS employers (and for these purposes perhaps GPs could think of themselves as such) should consider offering influenza immunisation to their "front line staff". I hope you have ordered enough vaccine and I hope that nationally there is sufficient available to meet all the orders that are coming in. Whatever happens I am sure that there will be lessons to be learnt for next year!

## FROM YOUR "OLD" MEDICAL SECRETARY – GRAHAM WARD

On 21 July I was given a great surprise when I was asked to attend the LMC Management Committee meeting with my wife, Jacqueline. Phil Green, the Chairman, said some very flattering words and then presented me with three cases of superb claret and a most substantial cheque.

Over the last seven years I have enjoyed working with the LMC officers and have been delighted to see the development of the services under Phil's leadership. I hope I have made my own contribution

in establishing the more pastoral activities as a significant aspect of the LMCs' work rather than the crisis intervention that my distinguished predecessors and I could manage while remaining as full-time practitioners. If I have been able to assist, comfort or support some of you, then I am delighted. There is no magic wand for most of the problems that present to a general practitioner, and as LMCs we have to be even handed, but wherever possible we try to resolve the dilemmas with everyone's interest at heart and to their satisfaction.

Thank you very much indeed for a wonderful present. You have an excellent organisation to back you up that is the envy of many areas of the country and I wish you well for the future.

## GENERIC DRUG PRICES

The DoH has decided to proceed with a statutory maximum price scheme for generic medicines and they have had discussion with the three major manufacturers. They believe that the revised prices are at a level that will allow the drug companies to produce the usual full range of products in normal market conditions. The prices came into effect on 3 August and reimbursement prices for pharmacists (and I imagine for dispensing doctor, but I have not seen details of this) will be altered in September allowing 4 weeks for stock clearance. The scheme will be reviewed and reported on within 15 months. It is hoped that these changes will prevent the sort of chaos that arose in the generic market last year, let us hope so!

## COMINGS & GOINGS JULY/AUGUST 2000

### Welcome to:

**Dr Jonathan Cope**, Holsworthy Health Centre

**Dr Agnies Calkoen**, Pathfields Practice, Plymouth

### Goodbye to:

**Dr Ian Barker**, Holsworthy Health Centre

**Dr John Huckle**, Croft Hall Medical Practice, Torquay

**Dr Gavin Haig**, Hammett Square Surgery, Tiverton

### Police Surgeon – Exeter

Required to assist in covering Heavitree Road Police Station, principally for Wednesdays but other night work would be available.

Initial appointment would be as Deputy with Deputy Retainer. Training available.

Please contact Dr R Anderson on  
01392 273484



### Non-Principal seeks RETAINER POSITION IN SOUTH DEVON AREA

Available from January 2001 –  
up to 4 sessions  
Please contact  
Dr Emma Walker:  
Tel: 01752 690720

## GP Retainer

### TORRINGTON HEALTH CENTRE NORTH DEVON

- For 3 or 4 sessions weekly
- 4 Partners in modern purpose-built premises
- Small town and rural dispensing practice
- Retainer has own room and BMA rates paid

Apply to: Mr B Butland, Torrington Health Centre, New Road, Torrington EX38 8EL. Tel: 01805 622247

## ST. LEONARD'S MEDICAL PRACTICE EXETER

**Requires a Replacement three quarter-time partner** to join a five-doctor practice (3½ WTE) in central Exeter, a busy Cultural centre, Cathedral and University city well situated for the moors and sea. Forward thinking practice with personal lists. Fully computerised with a friendly and supportive team. An NHS Beacon and R & D practice with the Investor In People Award. Partnership uses local IscaDoc Co-operative. MRCGP essential. Please apply with c.v. and names of two referees to

**Mr. Tim Smith**, Practice Manager,  
St. Leonard's Medical Practice, 34 Denmark Road,  
Exeter EX1 1SF. Tel: 01392 201794.

## REPLACEMENT PART-TIME PARTNER REQUIRED ASHBURTON

In rural, 3.5 partner practice on southern edge of Dartmoor. EMIS, Training and Dispensing in purpose-built practice. Out-of-Hours Co-operative. 16-Bed Community Hospital. Incoming partner will be expected to take appropriate part in all practice activities.

Application forms and further information available from:

**Richard Mitchell**, Practice Manager, The Surgery,  
1 Eastern Road, Ashburton,  
Devon TQ13 7AP. Tel: 01364 652440.  
Closing date for applications: 15 September 2000

## Queens Medical Centre Barnstaple Requires a full-time PRACTICE MANAGER

At our new, purpose built Town Centre Surgery. We are an expanding 4-partner practice with 6,600 patients, Fully computerised with EMIS and GPnet. The successful applicant should have excellent inter-personal skills With proven management, financial and IT abilities (Word and Excel essential)

Salary negotiable Job description available from:

**Dr N Brennan & Partners**  
Queens Medical Centre, 6/7 Queen Street  
Barnstaple EX32 8HY  
Tel: 01271 372672

Please send handwritten letters of application with CV  
Closing date – 11 September 2000

## Retained Doctor for The Blackdown Practice

We are seeking a retained doctor to assist in our rural dispensing practice in the Blackdown Hills, an AONB, from Autumn 2000, for up to four sessions a week.

We aim to offer a high standard of care to our patients, but also to our staff and each other.

The closing date for applications will be  
Monday 9 October 2000

If you are interested, please contact:  
01823 680555, for a practice profile.

## WONFORD GREEN SURGERY, EXETER PART TIME RECEPTIONIST/CLERK

We have a vacancy for a part time receptionist/clerk  
Hours – 16.5 per week to include alternate  
Saturday mornings (8.30-10.30)

Handwritten application letter together with a CV to:

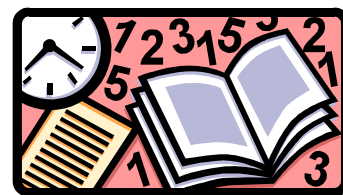
**Mrs W Prosser**, Practice Manager  
Wonford Green Surgery  
Burnthouse Lane  
Exeter EX2 6NF  
01392 250135

## COURSES, CONFERENCES AND INFORMATION

### ● GATEHOUSE – VENUES – CENTRAL LONDON

#### Communicating and Negotiating

Thursday, 5 October 2000 - This course will help you to plan negotiations, develop core communication skills and become a more effective negotiator.



#### Managing Changes in Organisations

Wednesday 25 October 2000 - This course covers initial direction-setting and planning stage, handling resistance and implementation.

#### An Introduction to Involving Service-Users in the planning, implementation, managing and monitoring of mental health services.

23 November 2000 & 22 February 2001 - A one-day 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.

**For further information contact: Gatehouse (020) 7420 3530/3533.**

#### Democracy & Accountability in the New NHS 1-Day Conference

sponsored by Socialist Health Association, Medical Practitioners Union, NHS Consultants Association

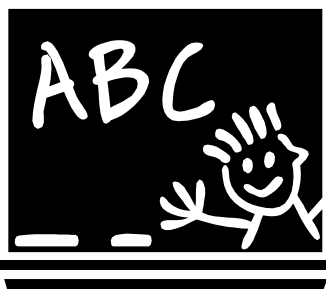
**Date: Saturday 18th November 2000 10.30 - 4.15**

**Venue: MSF Centre 33 - 37 Moreland Street, EC1, near Angel, Islington**

**Main speakers:**

- Prof Aneez Esmail, President of Medical Practitioners Union (confirmed)
- Donna Covey, Chief Executive ACHCEW (confirmed)
- Gisela Stuart MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Invited)
- Dr Guy Roath, NHS Consultants Association (confirmed)

The National Plan proposes substantial changes in the way the voices of patients and citizens are heard in the NHS.



Intended audience: Community Health Council members and Officers, Members of Health Authorities, NHS Trust Board Non-Executives, Primary Care Group and Primary Care Trust boards, doctors and workers in the health services, local councillors, academics and researchers, MPU, NHSCA & Socialist Health Association members.

Cost £15 (£10 to members) includes lunch and crèche. To book contact Socialist Health Association, 22 Blair Road, Manchester M16 8NS 0161 286 1926 or [weasel@cwcom.net](mailto:weasel@cwcom.net)

## UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

#### Community Pharmacy and Primary Care Trusts: looking to the future

Date: 11 October 2000 - The seminar will focus on the issues involved in joint working between community pharmacists and PCTs, and will examine the issue of whether trusts should purchase and dispense drugs, the role of pharmacy within primary care, and future directions for pharmacists working within NHS general practice.

Further details contact: 0121 414 7050. Internet: [www.bham.ac.uk/hsme/](http://www.bham.ac.uk/hsme/)

**For details of further HSMC seminars please contact Dr Darrin Baines. Tel: 0121 414 7705.**

# THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS TAMAR FACULTY

The McConaghey Memorial Lecture 2000 – "Tall Oaks From Little Acorns Grow"  
The story of the Exeter Institute of General Practice by Dr Michael Hall FRCGP.  
Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2000 at the Arundell Arms, Lifton at 7:00pm  
Dinner (Optional) 8:15pm

For an application form please contact Julie Orr, Tamar Faculty Office  
Tel 01392 403031 or email [c.j.orr@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:c.j.orr@exeter.ac.uk)



## WAST - CHANGE OF ADDRESS

WAST has moved from 3 Chinon Court, Tiverton and Powisland Drive, Plymouth and ALL correspondence should be sent to the following address:

Westcountry Ambulance Services NHS Trust  
3 Abbey Court  
Eagle Way  
Sowton Industrial Estate  
Exeter EX2 7HY



## WHOLE-TIME EQUIVALENTS

The national average list size per Whole Time Equivalent GP for England and Wales, based on October 1999 data, is 1,966 – a reduction of 13 patients over the figure for last year!

## BACK BYTES – OFFICE MANAGER'S MUTTERINGS

August is traditionally a quiet month (I do not know who defined traditionally.....) and therefore that is why the phone has not stopped ringing and we have been working non-stop and flat-out in the office!

What has been going on? The LMC Annual Report has taken considerable time to consolidate and is now nearing completion and is currently with the printer. This year I am very pleased with the quality and quantity of contributions for inclusion in the report and would like to extend a special thank you to all those who have given their time and effort to produce articles – I hope you all enjoy the final result.

Other things going on are a large number of ballots on the move to PCT that are in progress or preparation. Could I say again, that the Secretariat in conducting these ballots is totally unbiased about their outcome. Our only priority is to ensure that GPs have all the relevant information necessary to make an informed decision. **Make your vote count**; there is nothing worse than having a small turnout! If you have any questions or concerns feel free to call or email the office. Information is also available on the web site. We are also doing ballots on the election of PCT boards!



The use of Mercury devices has been discussed in detail at the South Devon LMC. An excellent paper produced by Jonathan Plumb the Communicable Disease Control Nurse at South & West Devon Health Authority was discussed and is available on our web site as well as a link to the Medical Device Agency latest bulletin dated July 2000 – this information is available as a PDF.

PDF or Portable Document Format files, this is the preferred method of distributing documents adopted by the Government and also the N&EDHA are easy to read and print but they can be difficult to save - I will do more on PDF in a later issue.



Click on this icon to save a PDF

**Quick tip** if you click on the disk icon it will allow you to save!

The next question is how do you open the file to edit the contents?

– That my friend is another expensive story!!

Devon LMC Factlet - the website in July received a record 1,904 Hits - Have Fun. ....

## Guidance on Verification of Death

An expected death can be presumed where there is a written statement from the patient's doctor that the patient's demise is anticipated within the near future, and no longer than 14 days ahead. The doctor will be able to issue a medical certificate as to the cause of death. This information should be shared with significant family.

