

MORGANNWG LOCAL MEDICAL COMMITTEE

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LMC Newsletter December 2009

General Practice in Wales in 2009

As another year approaches its close, it is traditional to look back on what has happened during the year. The year 2009 has been another difficult year for General Practice with the relentless pressure of work associated with:

- The ongoing treadmill of the Quality & Outcomes Framework (QOF)
- Disease Prevalence that is nearly 15% higher in Wales than in England which means that most GPs in Wales work harder with fewer resources and less remuneration
- Delays in getting additional items into the Welsh Enhanced Services “Basket” for 2009/10
- Delays in getting new Local Enhanced Services signed off and out to practices
- The expectation that Practices will deliver most services from 08.00 to 18.30hrs
- The Measles outbreak and the need to offer immunisation to large numbers of children whose parents had not presented them for immunisation in the past (and didn’t this time!)
- Work moving from Secondary Care into the Community without the resources to deliver it
- Pandemic Flu with the Enhanced Primary Care approach in Wales and the large numbers of patients who need to be offered immunisation against H1N1 Swine Flu.

Add to the above the paltry award to almost all Welsh GPs by the DDRB and it is no surprise that General Practice feels over-worked, undervalued and generally “put upon”.

So, is there any good news?

There is for patients as General Practice continues to be available to those who are sick or believe themselves to be sick, providing reassurance and investigating, treating and referring where appropriate and patients still value their GPs for doing this.

What will the future bring?

The NHS in Wales is undergoing a major change to the delivery of care, moving the emphasis away from hospitals and into the community, and who will be expected to provide the medical care in the community? The GP of course! For the changes to work effectively, there must be a transfer of resources along with the work. General Practice will endeavour to deliver on what it does well but it is a finite resource and cannot meet infinite demand.

Morgannwg LMC is the voice of General Practice locally and it will continue to take the views of its GPs forward to the Welsh Assembly and to the UK politicians if they will listen.

Happy New Year to you all from Morgannwg Local Medical Committee

Significant Events

The Interim Locality Medical Director for ABMU Health Board is keen to encourage GPs to report Significant Events to the Locality Office so that they can be collated. This will then give early warning of areas of risk to patients and can be taken up with the relevant departments. Areas that are of particular concern to the LMC are:

- **Inappropriate advice from Secondary Care** – particularly relevant to drug therapy

- **Exclusion Criteria for Referrals** – particularly relevant to referrals of patients with so-called minor mental health problems

- **Access 2009: Referral to Treatment Target** – where patients are “bounced” by the Health Board and are then lost to the system

Incidents relating to the above should be submitted on the *Notification of Incident/Significant Event in Primary Care* form to your Locality office together with a copy to the LMC.

Swine Flu Immunisation Campaign

As Practices are working hard to complete their part of Phase 1 of the Swine Flu Immunisation Campaign (High Medical Risk groups), the Welsh Assembly Government has announced the start of Phase 2 (Children age 6 months to rising 5s) who are at particular risk of developing complications of Swine Flu, even though they have no other medical risks. With regard to the task faced by Practices if they take this work on, there is disappointment and even anger that the resources offered are not adequate to meet the actual cost of delivering Phase 2 with the need for clinics in addition to the normal GMS work continuing. The number of children to be immunised will be large but the offer by Health Boards of Protected Immunisation Time will offset some of the resource issues. Also, the Joint Committee on Vaccination & Immunisation has now recommended a single dose of GSK Pandemrix for everyone who is not immuno-compromised as the first dose has been shown to develop adequate antibodies to confer protection. For those children who have had two doses there is no problem but they are likely to have higher antibodies than children who receive only one dose. The reason for the change is that there have been studies on the first few thousand children receiving vaccination and the results have now been analysed to decide the best approach. The results also suggest that children were experiencing a high rate of side effects after the second dose (which were self-limiting).

A further group that are at higher risk are Post Partum Women who did not receive Swine Flu immunisation in pregnancy so they should be offered Swine Flu Immunisation as soon as possible.

Finally, other childhood immunisations can be given with Swine Flu immunisation so this may be another opportunity to offer missed Childhood Immunisations, especially MMR.

The LMC Secretaries Conference 2009

Your Secretary attended the above conference on 03 December 2009. The *State of the Nation* address was given by Dr Laurence Buckman, Chairman of GPC, during which he updated LMCs on the following:

- **How patients see their Practice** – He suggested that GPC and LMCs should encourage Practices to look at themselves from patient's point of view and to concentrate on the outcome of the delivery of services with the patient at the centre. This would include flexibility of appointments. He also questioned the half-day closure as to whether it was still appropriate. His message was "If we don't do it, someone else may!"
- **Partnerships** - He talked about the long-term view of General Practice and the need to encourage Practices to offer partnerships to incoming colleagues. However, he was keen to discourage GPs seeking partnerships with larger organisations, particularly where the GP retires and hands over the GMS Contract to a large healthcare organisation which will result in it never being a GMS Practice again.
- **Practice boundaries** – The removal of Practice boundaries is likely to proceed in England (and this could spill over into Wales) despite advice from the Profession. He talked about the return of the Kenneth Clarke view of "money pinned to the patient".

Contract negotiations – These are ongoing but it is likely that there will be very little for General Practice. Also, the distribution of any increase could create problems for MPIG Practices. There will be a new PES. QOF will have no changes this year and next year but "28 redundant points"

will be recycled in April 2011 as part of the threshold review. NICE have said that QOF is basically OK but there is still a move to look at QOF indicators, more incentives and local QOF.

- **Overall view** - He felt that there will be a need for Practices to resist being picked off by PCOs and the phrase "Where does it say in the Regs.....?" should be used if appropriate. Also, unreasonable behaviour by PCOs should be reported back to GPC. He felt that a united approach was essential, especially whereas May 2010 will be "*Another leap into the dark, or will it?*" when there is a change of UK Government.

Electronic Referrals

The ABMU element of the Welsh Clinical Communication Gateway (WCCG) pilot is well underway. Four GP practices across the health community are currently involved in the pilot (Dr Muir & Partners, Briton Ferry; New Surgery, Pencoed; Clydach Primary Care Centre & Castle Surgery, Neath) and they are sending electronic referrals to the Outpatients Departments at the Princess of Wales, Morriston and Singleton Hospitals.

To date the Health Board has received 133 electronic referrals and the feedback has been very positive. A full evaluation is about to commence and this is expected to be last until the end of February 2010.

The project is now looking for further volunteers to come on board for the start of the rollout in April 2010. If your Practice is either EMIS PCS or In Practice VISION and you are interested in joining the project, please contact Suzanne Rodgers, Head of Implementation & Support via email at ABMU or on 01639 683634. Alternatively you can contact the pilot lead at your Locality Office.

Next LMC meetings: Full Committee 7.00pm Tuesday 12 Jan 2010 - Towers Hotel, Jersey Marine
Exec Committee 7.00pm Tuesday 09 February 2010 - Venue TBC
Full Committee 7.00pm Tuesday 09 March 2010 - Towers Hotel, Jersey Marine