



THE MEDIA AND GENERAL PRACTICE

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As you will no doubt be aware, GPs have received unprecedented levels of comments and criticisms in the press recently. As a result, Dr Hamish Meldrum, Chairman of the General Practitioners Committee, wrote to the profession. It was suggested that it might be useful for GPs to have available a list of facts relating to general practice, which they could share with their patients should the need arise. Below is such a list, adapted from a document produced by Wessex LMC, with their kind permission.

- There are approximately 36,000 GPs in the UK
- It takes 6 years to train as a doctor and then a further 3 years to train to become a GP.
- Each patient on average sees their GP 4 times per year – this means, there are over 250,000,000 GP/patient consultations per year; 15% of the entire population see a GP in a two week period.
- The average practice in the UK has about 6,000 registered patients and 3 - 4 GPs. The average full time GP looks after 1,700 – 1,800 patients.
- The average face to face contact with a GP costs £20, compared to £24 in a Walk in Centre, £27 for a telephone contact with NHS Direct, £75 for an attendance at A&E and between £100 – 300 for each attendance at a hospital Out Patient Department.
- GPs are paid LESS than 20 pence per patient per day to provide all the day to day care that is required. This is less than the cost of a daily newspaper.
- GPs refer about 10% of patients seen to hospital specialities, which means that nearly 90% of all health needs of the British population are managed entirely in general practice.
- In a recent Government survey it was found that patients were more satisfied with their GPs than they were with the hospital service. General Practice in the NHS was the most popular of all public services.
- In a recent Government White Paper, they stated that “by international standards general practice in England is efficient and of high quality. Indeed many countries view with envy our system of list based general practice”.
- GPs are now paid differently in that nearly 50% of their income is via quality performance-related pay.
- The performance-related pay is based on achievements made in the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF). This consists of over 100 targets of which 76 cover 10 important disease areas, measuring performance against proven standards. This has contributed to the largest and most admired clinical database in the world.
- The Government has transferred all its responsibility for funding part of GPs’ pensions to the GPs and then claimed this was a part of a pay rise.