



Engagement to counter abuse of practice staff

Our work to raise awareness of the abuse practices are receiving, counter misinformation and seek practical support are continuing. The information provided in response to our recent survey on abuse has helped with this, alongside figures from our regular workforce, the latest round of which is in practice inboxes now.

Last week we met with representatives of the Metropolitan Police's Ward Panels to discuss threats and actual violence directed towards practices. The meeting took place in response to our letter to the Met in raising concerns on behalf of our constituent practices. We have also had numerous meetings with MPs and Councillors to raise area specific concerns.

We also wrote to hospital trusts asking them to support general practice in pushing back against misinformation that drives abuse of staff. Barts have sent a particularly useful letter to clinical staff from Prof Alistair Chesser, Group Chief Medical Officer which can be read below. LMCs and GPs may wish to share this with other local trusts as an example of good collegiate working.

Dear colleague,

We are at the start of what is going to be a difficult winter. Covid patients are occupying a significant number of our beds and our resources. On top of this we have unprecedented demands on our elective and non-elective programmes. Our emergency departments, operating theatres, wards, and outpatient clinics are full and our waiting lists as long as most of us can remember. And we are doing all of this with infection control demands which slow things down and make it harder to do things than it used to be.

I recognise how hard this is, and all the more so after the 18 months we have all been through. I could not be more grateful for your leadership throughout this period. It is the consultant body to whom our staff and patients turn for role modelling to emulate. Your example and hard work have been exemplary and have meant so much to those around you - thank you.

As well as supporting each other, it is vital we continue to support our colleagues in primary care. They are receiving uncharacteristic bad press from some quarters of the media as you know. This, in addition to long standing and worsening problems in meeting the demand they face, the expectations of their patients, and the stresses of working through this pandemic are damaging morale amongst our valued primary care colleagues. We can help primary care in many ways. Please actively support our GP colleagues when speaking to your patients - our problems lie in the demands on our systems not with individual doctors and nurses. And please act as an ally and call out and challenge any "anti GP" statements if you hear them. Such talk can only be harmful as well as being unfair, disrespectful and most likely untrue.

And please also avoid asking GP surgeries to do things if possible if they lie outside the bounds of the GP contract. In essence, if we can more easily do the test/ follow up/ check the result / make the referral and it will be better or as good for the patient if we do, then do so. There is a net saving of work for the system and for the patient, and by doing so we are protecting each other. We are looking at how we can keep patients on the waiting list informed without involving our clinical staff when possible.

I appreciate the pressures are not only in primary care - they lie very much with us as well and we are all feeling it. We will get through this by working together and providing mutual support to all our partners.

We enjoy fantastic collaboration with our primary care colleagues in all sorts of ways, not least outpatient transformation programmes and urgent and emergency care reform. We are also lucky to have some of the most able and committed GPs in the country working alongside us. Let us continue to show our support for them as well as each other and continue to lead by example.

Thanks for all you are doing - everybody is grateful to you

Alistair