

Five-year doctor checks system concern



Government ministers have said that the health service needs to make certain that the new assessment system can begin at the end of 2012.

Under the present system, doctors can carry out their entire career without ever undergoing assessment to determine the quality of care they provide.

The concept of carrying out checks was first proposed in 2000 and the current plan is to carry out checks every five years from 2012.

However, the House of Commons Health Committee said difficulties still existed within the system and they needed to be

resolved before it was launched.

The committee warned that more thought needed to be given as to how badly performing doctors would be dealt with.

They added that the General Medical Council needed to provide better guidance.

GMC chief executive Niall Dickson said he was in agreement with the committee that there should be no delays in introducing the checks in 2012.

"We are working on a number of other fronts to make sure revalidation is fit for purpose", he added.

17489

Narcolepsy 'linked' to swine flu



A possible link has been highlighted between a swine flu vaccine and the rare sleeping disorder narcolepsy.

At least 12 countries have reported the connection, according to the World Health Organisation, which has said that the claims need further investigation.

So far, some 52 cases of narcolepsy linked to the Pandemrix jab have been reported in Finland but there are also cases reported in the UK, Sweden and Iceland.

However the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has said a definite link had not been confirmed and that the Pandemrix vaccine should continue to be used as recommended.

A spokesman said: "The benefits of vaccination outweigh any risk of a possible side effect."

Narcolepsy is a rare condition - with around 10 new cases per million people every year - where a person falls asleep suddenly and

unexpectedly.

Tests carried out in Finland found that children given the swine flu jab Pandemrix - which is made by GlaxoSmithKline - were about nine times more likely to develop narcolepsy than those who had not been vaccinated.

The WHO's global advisory committee on vaccine safety is monitoring the situation and wants further investigations into suggested links between narcolepsy and Pandemrix and other pandemic H1N1 vaccines.

The WHO said: "Even at this stage, it does not appear that narcolepsy following vaccination against pandemic influenza is a general worldwide phenomenon and this complicates interpretation of the findings in Finland."

The Pandemrix vaccine has been used in 47 countries following the swine flu outbreak last year.

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NHS Direct plans to run appointment bookings

NHS Direct has said it plans to manage GP appointment booking systems and is in talks with GP consortia. They said they would go into partnership with one consortium and were in the process of discussing the issue with eight others. NHS Direct stated it was talking to GP consortia in Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and London. It said it had offered to aid the consortia in meeting the government's £20m savings target by providing "remotely-delivered services", to "reduce pressure on face-to-face primary care".

DH mental health advisor sacked

Professor David Richards, the head of mental research services at the University of Exeter, has been sacked for questioning a statement made by the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg. Professor Richards called Mr Clegg's claim that £400 million of "new money" would be given to enhance access to talking therapies "a lie". Professor Richards worked as an independent mental health advisor for the Department of Health and played a key role in the development of the improving access to physical therapies programme.

Government face legal challenge over Darzi centres

The government is to face a legal challenge by companies in the private sector regarding its intention to review contracts at Darzi centres across the country. According to Pulse private sector providers are angry at the decision and intend to launch a challenge based on NHS competitor laws. David Worskett, director of the NHS Partners Network, said: "PCTs are looking to close health centres simply because they seem to be the easiest things to close but this flies in the face of the Government's own commitment to take into account patient choice."

£50m legal claims against NHS in Essex

New figures show that over the past two years, more than £50m has been paid out following legal claims against the NHS in Essex.

This figure includes compensation to patients as well as legal costs with many of the claims arising from 'Serious Untoward Incidents' (SUI). The SUIs involved arise from a wide range of events, including when a patient has been harmed. The figures have been obtained by the BBC using the Freedom of Information Act, showing the SUI notifications from five local Primary Care Trusts from January 2009 to May 2010.

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Cost of NHS workforce back pain revealed

The charity BackCare has warned that NHS staff who injure their backs cost taxpayers more than £400 million each year in staff absence and wasted training.

It suggests at a time when the health service is required to make major savings, large amounts of money could be saved simply by taking a closer look at the wellbeing of the workforce. Research suggests that over 80,000 nurses sustain back injuries at work each year.

17506

NI to close hospitals

Research commissioned by the Health and Social Care Board has warned that some hospitals in Northern Ireland may have to close to help balance the books over the coming years.

It says a financial crisis is looming unless tough decisions are made. Other controversial suggestions contained in the document include a charge for patients going to A&E or their GP through health minister Michael McGimpsey said he can not support some of the proposals. There are fears that 4,000 jobs could be lost because of budget cuts.

17539

NHS Direct denies GP bookings reports

NHS Direct has denied reports that it plans to take over the GP appointment bookings system. While it is working with GPs in some areas of the UK on urgent out-of-hours appointments, the organisation says that a mass take-over is not planned. They are to discuss with GP consortias different ways of working together in areas such as 111 pilots, practice and local level reporting systems, web services, management of patients with long-term conditions, and out-of-hours GP appointment booking.

17544

FT Network to split from NHS Confed

The Foundation Trust Network has decided to split from the NHS Confederation with effect from April. The decision follows a period of consultation in which 71% of Foundation Trust Network member organisations responded with 78% of those respondents saying that they wanted the network to become independent while continuing to work closely in partnership with the confederation and its other networks. Foundation trusts will remain members of the confederation for the first year so that the two organisations can work together.

17542

GPs offered £68 per hour for commissioning work

Leading GPs have said the offer of £67.50 per hour to be involved in commissioning is not enough. Dr Clive Henderson said: "The initial offer was for £67.50 per hour. The current offer on the table sounded better at £45 plus receipted locum bills for board/clinical executive work, or £35 plus locum for transition group work. That was until we found locum costs were thought to be £35 per hour. GPs would not be able to get adequate locum cover at that cost."

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