

For immediate release: Thursday 8th May 2008

BMA launches its national “Support your Surgery” campaign

Details of a national “Support your Surgery” campaign to defend and promote NHS GP services in England, have today (8/5/08) been announced by the BMA.

GPs are worried that government plans to introduce more commercial providers into general practice could destabilise existing services, depersonalise care and put some GP practices at risk of closure. The number of private firms winning contracts for GP practices is growing and, at the same time, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) have been instructed by the government to set up new health centres, or polyclinics, that commercial providers can bid for. In many areas there has been little or no prior consultation on the need for these super surgeries.

The BMA will be sending all GP practices a campaign pack containing posters, leaflets and stickers to help them inform the public about local plans. Practices will also be asking their patients to sign a petition that will be presented to Downing Street in June as a giant birthday card celebrating the NHS at 60. Other activities will include advertising, open days in surgeries, and making contact with local MPs.

Dr Laurence Buckman, chairman of the BMA’s GPs committee said: “Although large health centres may work in some areas where patients and clinicians agree on a proven need, the government wishes to impose the polyclinic model on every PCT in the country regardless of need or demand. Private commercial companies would also be able to bid for the new centres leading to fears that they will be more interested in their shareholders than patients.

“The government appears to be moving further away from the personalised care it claims to aspire to. Patients will find it more difficult to see the same GP each time and continuity of care could suffer. PCTs should be encouraged to invest in their local GP practices and support joint working between practices and local hospitals. This would allow care to be enhanced for patients without the risk of unnecessarily duplicating or destabilising existing services, and be better value for money for the taxpayer.”

Ends

Contact:

Rebecca Spargo
Public Affairs Division
British Medical Association
BMA House, Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9JP

020 7383 6174
After 6:00 pm and weekends:
020 8651 5130
020 8374 4128;
01525 379792 ; 07855 145 274

07747 394450; 07943 821 060

BMA web site: www.bma.org.uk

Email: pressoffice@bma.org.uk