Who are we?
The BMA Private Practice Committee (PPC) represents the views and interests of doctors engaged in private general and specialist practice, whether full time or in addition to their NHS work, to key stakeholders, including insurers, private hospitals, the GMC and the Competitions and Markets Authority.

We also hold an annual conference for doctors working in private practice and provide advice and guidance on a range of private practice issues which members are able to access through the Private Practice pages of the BMA website, the PPC secretariat, First Point of Contact and BMA Member Relations.

Mr Derek Machin is the chair. Dr Susan Horsewood-Lee is the primary care lead and Dr Tom Kane, the secondary care lead. The secretariat comprises of Reena Zapata, the Senior policy advisor for the committee, Rosemary Hammond, Policy advice and support officer and Bernadette Ross, Committee support officer.
Conference
The 2018 Private practice conference was held on Wednesday 11 April at BMA House. The conference was aimed at doctors who are thinking about setting up in private practice and established practitioners who could benefit from some practical advice. It was well attended by over 130 delegates.

The morning plenary session covered the changing economics of private practice, revalidation and indemnity. In the afternoon, the conference broke up into three parallel sessions:

- primary care — including how to set up as an independent GP
- secondary care for newcomers — including how to make it to number one in private practice
- secondary care for established practitioners — including financial and retirement planning and how to sell your company

Highlights included Dr Sarah Jordan, a GP at the Portobello Clinic who advised GPs on how to set up as an independent GP, a presentation by Mr Geoffrey Glazer, Chairman, Federation of Independent Practitioner Organisations on current issues facing secondary care clinicians and a panel discussion on indemnity with representatives from the three main Medical Defence Organisations and a representative from an independent indemnity organisation.

The conference was also an opportunity for the BMA to support doctors in private practice and engage in issues which affect the sector. There was an informal networking drinks reception following the conference which provided delegates with an opportunity to network with colleagues.

A summary of the conference will be published online in due course.
How do doctors fare with private medical insurers (PMIs)

The BMA has recently received further legal advice regarding the challenges faced by consultants engaged in work with PMIs. Over the past few months, the Private Practice Committee Secretariat undertook an evidence gathering exercise, collating information about objectionable practices encountered by members who provide services under recognition agreements with PMIs. The PPC’s concern is that the reported practices are damaging, not only to the interests of the BMA’s members, but also to consumer choice and the best interests of patients.

In the light of its evidence gathering, the PPC has categorised the emerging concerns which include the publication of fixed fee schedules, PMIs restricting the ability of patients to pay top-up fees, PMI managed care initiatives or clinical care pathways, the threat of de-recognition, interference in clinical decisions and reduced reimbursements. Many of the concerns which have arisen are products of the inherent imbalance in the strength of the parties’ respective bargaining positions. The PPC secretariat is currently compiling evidence from clinicians on interference in clinical decisions by PMIs. If you have any information, please contact Reena Zapata at rzapata@bma.org.uk
The e-community for GPs
As a result of the high number of GPs who attended the 2017 Private practice conference, the BMA has set up an e-platform for GPs wanting to set up in private practice and for GPs with existing practices. For new entrants to the private sector, the platform will offer a chance to connect with colleagues who have already established and run successful practices. For doctors with existing practices, there will be opportunities to make contacts and share ideas. The platform allows participants to share good practices, offer advice and tips on setting up in private practice and offer ongoing support. It went live in January; if you would like to join, please email Rosemary Hammond at rhammond@bma.org.uk.

Updating membership
Last year, as part of an exercise to improve the way the BMA engages with its members and improve member experience, the membership department gathered vital information about members at a number of in-house events. The resulting information has enhanced the data the BMA currently holds; the aim is to send bespoke communication to members of the Association in the future. As part of this project, the PPC chair has communicated with colleges to make sure we have a comprehensive list of specialties.

While this project is ongoing, we would urge you to please remember to check and update your specialty, grade, place of work and contact details to ensure your BMA record is up to date.