

All CCGs

March 2016

Standards for the communication of patient diagnostic test results on discharge from hospital

Dear CCG

You may be aware of the above recently published guidance¹ from NHS England.

The guidance is explicit that *“the clinician who orders the test is responsible for reviewing, acting and communicating the result and actions taken to the General Practitioner and patient even if the patient has been discharged”*. This is in keeping with joint BMA guidance between the general practitioners committee and the consultants committee².

I am writing to request that this principle is implemented locally through your commissioning levers and service specifications with acute providers.

You are aware of the extreme pressures affecting general practice, in which 9 out of 10 GPs believe that excessive workload pressures are affecting the quality care they can provide³. NHS England’s recent GMS contract agreement made a clear commitment to reducing bureaucracy in general practice to help manage workload.

The practice of acute providers copying investigation results automatically to GPs adds unnecessary bureaucratic workload onto practices, and is a particular threat to patient safety as each party may consider the other responsible for acting on the result. We would suggest that you require providers to cease routinely sending copies of test results to practices, especially given that current technology allows GPs to access hospital pathology databases through secure

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/patientsafety/wp-content/uploads/sites/32/2016/03/discharge-standards-march-16.pdf>

² <http://www.bma.org.uk/support-at-work/gp-practices/service-provision/duty-of-care-to-patients-regarding-test-results>

³ <http://www.bma.org.uk/working-for-change/negotiating-for-the-profession/bma-general-practitioners-committee/gpc-vision-2015>

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electronic links. Communications should be limited to those test results that have clinical significance, and these should be accompanied by a clear explanation that the result has been seen and actioned to fulfil the investigators' responsibilities, as clearly stated in the NHS England guidance.

I have copied this letter to your Local Medical Committee, so that there can be a coordinated approach to implementing the above principle, and in keeping with your responsibility to support workload pressures on your member practices.

I would also request that you put in place systems for practices to provide service alerts for you to take action, where the acute provider is not complying with these arrangements.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chaand Nagpaul', written in a cursive style.

Dr Chaand Nagpaul CBE
Chair, BMA General Practitioners Committee