

**Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP**

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1H 0EU

23 July 2018

Dear Secretary of State,

Congratulations on your appointment. As Chair of the BMA's general practitioners committee (GPC) I look forward to working with you to address the many issues currently facing general practice, and, by doing so, improving the care we are able to offer to our patients. By way of background, GPC is the only body which represents all GPs in the UK. I work alongside elected and appointed members to discuss the latest issues facing primary care and champion the role of NHS GPs, whether or not they are BMA members.

I was pleased to hear your commitment last Friday to tackle the substantial workload carried by GPs. This is a major factor of the current recruitment and retention crisis facing general practice. It was also good to hear you talk of the need for more staff to work alongside GPs, as delivering this has been one of our key aims. For instance, if every practice had a pharmacist working within it on a daily basis, this could not only reduce some of the workload burden currently carried by GPs, but it could also lead to improved safety in medicines management. Similarly, if every practice had a mental health therapist linked to it, we could significantly improve the care we offer to the increasing numbers of patients presenting with mental health concerns.

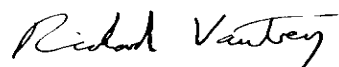
GPC not only welcome your prioritisation of improving the morale of the workforce, but also your focus on technology and prevention. These are core elements of general practice. Ever since I joined my partnership, in Leeds in 1994, I have used electronic records in consultations. General practice has been at the forefront of IT developments for decades and there is a strong desire to continue to embrace new technology that can both improve patient care and help to manage workload. We, therefore, welcome the £500M commitment for the roll out of innovative technology and look forward to discussing what this might mean in reality for general practice. You will know that it is NHS England and CCGs that fund and provide IT services to practices and we would be keen to work with you to ensure this support is increased so that all practices can utilise evidence based artificial intelligence, machine learning and automation, and when clinically appropriate, for GPs to be able to offer their patients smart-phone consultations.

General practice is the foundation on which the NHS is built. The fact that we are failing to attract and retain sufficient GPs to meet the growing needs of our patients, coupled with falling patient satisfaction, are clear signs of the crisis we are under. Last year the GPC produced a report, *Saving*

*General Practice*, in which we outlined our ambition for general practice, offering clear solutions which would resolve many of the current problems we face. I enclose a copy of this important report for you and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this with you further.

In your West Suffolk speech, you concluded with a commitment to invest in primary care. The need for this investment is urgent and I hope we can meet shortly in order to talk about how we can work together to turn around the crisis in general practice, restore the confidence of patients and make general practice once again the popular career choice it once was.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Vautrey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

**Dr Richard Vautrey**

Chair, BMA General Practitioners Committee