

The RCGP and Lord Darzi's review of the NHS



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General practice: a good deal for the UK - delivering continuous, high quality care for patients. The second in a series of factsheets produced by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) on Lord Ara Darzi's review of the NHS

In the UK, access to a General Practitioner is free and relatively easy to access - unlike some other western countries.

Key facts:

- i. On an average day, there are more than 1 million GP consultations and 1.5 million prescriptions are issued
- ii. Around 90% of all the health needs of the British population are managed in primary care by GPs, working with practice and district nurses and health visitors
- iii. Over 15% of the entire population sees a GP in a two week period and 75% of patients say they value the fact that they can see a GP or health care professional they know and trust
- iv. General practice/primary care is the most cost-effective part of the NHS - GP care for a whole year costs less than a single day's hospital admission
- v. GP consultations cost less than outpatient consultations, accident and emergency and ambulance calls
- vi. A face-to-face consultation with a GP costs the NHS about the same as a telephone consultation with an anonymous nurse through NHS Direct

Patient satisfaction

Levels of satisfaction with general practice are higher than for any other public service in the UK.

Results from the Government's recent Improving Practice Questionnaire showed that GP practices scored a rating of 'good' or above in all 27 measurable areas, with 13 categories being rated as 'very good' or 'excellent'.

In the 2005 Healthcare Commission patient survey, around 97% of respondents said that they had confidence and trust in their GP, with 92% stating that their doctor had always treated them with dignity and respect. 82% of people reported that their doctor listened carefully to them and 88% said they had been involved in decisions about new medication.

The majority of patients say they receive the good care and services from their GP and practice team. Patients also value the fact that their care is personal and tailored to them as individuals.

The three principles of general practice

At the RCGP - a network of over 33,000 family doctors - we believe that the NHS of the future should be built on the principles of good general practice:

1. the doctor-patient relationship
2. personal care
3. continuity of care

General practice is essential to a quality health service because:

- i. Patients want personalised care - to see a doctor they know and who knows them
- ii. Patients want healthcare close to home in the heart of the community - preferably within walking or pram pushing distance or on a good bus route
- iii. Patients want co-ordination of care with GPs liaising with specialists and hospitals where necessary
- iv. GPs work in practice teams able to deal with multiple conditions at one time and integrate different types of care for patients, preventing expensive duplication or disjointed care from different providers
- v. GPs provide aftercare for patients discharged from hospital
- vi. GPs never discharge patients but provide lifelong care
- vii. Prevention can be better than cure - GPs work hard to prevent conditions such as strokes and heart attacks

The RCGP Roadmap

GPs are not standing back or being complacent - we want to do more for our patients. We outline our vision for the future of general practice and the NHS in the landmark Roadmap document - www.rcgp.org.uk/roadmap

Under our proposals, GP teams would deal with the majority of health problems, including mental health, in the community and we would have greater access to scans and x-rays, meaning patients would be sent to hospital only as a last resort.

We want longer consultation times as the 10 minutes currently allocated to each patient in the UK remains the lowest in Western Europe. We are also calling for extra support for patients who have specific difficulties in getting access to the services they need, such as people with poor English, those with learning difficulties and the homeless.

For more information please visit:-

www.rcgp.org.uk/roadmap

Have your say:-

We are making our views known to Lord Darzi and the Government but you can also have your say on the 'Our NHS' website - <http://www.ournhs.nhs.uk/>

If you have any comments or would like further information please contact the RCGP Patient Partnership Group (PPG) at ppg@rcgp.org.uk

General practice is the solution - not the problem.