



Business as usual

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Chair's message Peter Dixon



There are a variety of important issues covered in this newsletter relevant to chiropractors and patient welfare. I suspect, though, that the subject many will want to read about is one that the GCC is unable to comment upon in any detail – the complaints about almost 600 chiropractors we've recently received. This compares with the average of 40 or so complaints we usually receive a year.

What I can say is that we will investigate every complaint in line with our statutory requirements, and the chiropractors have been told that we won't be starting the investigating process until we've recruited sufficient staff to cope with this unusual situation.

In the meantime, it's 'business as usual'.

Revalidation

Work continues on the development of a system of revalidation for the chiropractic profession that is risk based and proportionate.

We're developing this approach in consultation with interested parties – including members of the public, patients and the chiropractic professional organisations – who are working with economists to analyse and review all of the issues relevant to the implementation of a meaningful and cost-effective system of revalidation. You can read more about this below.

NICE guidelines

The National Institute for Health & Clinical Excellence (NICE) has published its guideline on the management of persistent low back pain – I hope all chiropractors received the reference copy we circulated. If implemented by NHS commissioners as NICE proposes, the guideline will be good news for NHS patients who deserve a consistent approach that's based on best practice, available evidence and their own preferences.

Two further relevant NICE guidelines that we're circulating to the profession are summarised inside.

Revalidation – the business case

The GCC is working with economists to ensure that our work on revalidation covers the major points highlighted by the Department of Health:

- ensure that the costs of revalidation are proportionate to the benefits it could potentially deliver to each health profession and patients
- develop a credible business case by gathering evidence, piloting and testing concepts
- measure the gap between having, and not having, revalidation
- develop an impact assessment providing the baseline for the anticipated costs of revalidation

We've had valuable input from our Revalidation Working Group, whose membership includes patients, their representatives and the chiropractic professional organisations.

It's anticipated that in November 2009, Council will consider a report that will address measuring 'the gap' and that will enable us to identify the next steps.

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The new GCC Code and Standard briefing events

It's not too late to book your place

The GCC is hosting seven briefing events across the four countries to introduce the new [Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency: effective from 30 June 2010](#).

They will give chiropractors the opportunity to get to know the new Code and Standard and to ask questions.

We've written to all chiropractors with details of the venues, times and programme. It's not too late to book your place – but please contact us soon – we need to know in advance how many people to cater for.

To book your place, contact Paul Robinson at the GCC on 020 7713 5155 or email: enquiries@gcc-uk.org.

Area	Date: 2009	Venue
Belfast	Tuesday 22 September	The Park Plaza Hotel, Belfast
Birmingham	Tuesday 6 October	The NEC, Birmingham
Edinburgh	Thursday 15 October	Quality Hotel, Edinburgh Airport
London	Wednesday 21 October	GCC, 44 Wicklow Street, London
Glamorgan	Tuesday 3 November	University of Glamorgan
Leeds	Wednesday 4 November	The Carriageworks, Leeds
Bournemouth	Thursday 12 November	The Chine Hotel, Bournemouth

CHRE annual performance review

In July 2009, the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) published its performance reviews of the nine UK regulators of health professionals.

The GCC's performance

CHRE described the GCC as “an efficient and effective regulator” with “well-planned and thought-out strategies”. Overall, CHRE identified:

- eight areas of excellence
- no area that is less than good performance
- no areas where improvement is required.

Margaret Coats, GCC Chief Executive and Registrar, said: “CHRE's performance review process is a useful and positive exercise – it's particularly good for benchmarking an organisation's achievements and identifying potential areas of further development based on the good practice of other regulators”.

About CHRE's performance review process

The performance review reports comprise an assessment of performance against five functions: standards and guidance; registration; fitness to practise; education; and governance and external relations.

More information

CHRE's Performance review report 2008/09 can be downloaded here:
<http://www.chre.org.uk/media/18/142>

Time to renew your GCC registration

We'll soon be circulating GCC registration renewal packs to chiropractors. You'll recognise them when they land on your doormat so, if you are planning to renew your registration, please complete and return the application to us as quickly as you can. It helps our Registrations Team, Jamie Button and Beatrice Armstrong, enormously when applications are returned to us sooner, rather than later. This is because it enables Jamie and Beatrice to manage the large quantities of applications received within a relatively short space of time.

Smoothing the way

We know how irritated some of you have been about having to repeat information that we already have, so this year the registration forms will be pre-printed with personal information – for example, the applicant's name, practice address, contact details and registration number.

Jamie Button, who managed the registration renewals last year, reflected on what went well and what we've since done to help smooth the process this year.

Jamie said *"Last year nearly 15% of chiropractors sent us applications that contained errors. Most mistakes were simple omissions like failing to sign and date the application form – so please double-check it before posting. We've reviewed the application form and rewritten the guidance notes, so I hope that this will help registrants through the process and reduce the number of applications that we have to return"*.

More tips

Recording your Continuing Professional Development (CPD):

- please keep a copy of your CPD summary sheet, just in case you're randomly selected to provide evidence to support your declared CPD hours. This is because the evidence you submit must relate to the CPD that you've declared

- the mandatory CPD year runs from 1 September to 31 August and registrants must have completed 30 hours of CPD – 15 hours of which should have been learning with others.

If you're not renewing

It is essential that chiropractors who do not plan to register next year:

- ensure that they have the necessary indemnity insurance for **past** practice – this is a legal requirement and ensures that chiropractors are covered in the event a claim is made
- contact the GCC to discuss your options.

The bottom line

Please remember that your registration is liable to be removed with effect from **15 December 2009** if your complete application, fee and CPD Summary Sheet are not received by 30 November.

If this happens it will be illegal to describe yourself as a chiropractor, or to imply that you are a chiropractor, until your name is restored to the register. The fee for restoration to the register is £1,250.

Amendments to the Registration Rules

From 1 September 2009, the following changes to the Registration Rules came into force:

- removal of registration application forms from the statutory instrument, thereby allowing changes to be made in a timely manner
- removal of exemption from payment of the annual retention fee for registrants who are subject to investigation, proceedings or suspension
- removal of £75 fee for change of registered address.

Contact us

If you have any questions or have any doubts about making your application, please phone **020 7713 5155** during office hours (9am to 5.30pm, Monday to Friday) to speak to the Registrations Team. Or email retentions2009@gcc-uk.org and someone will contact you.

Guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)

Low back pain: early management of persistent non-specific low back pain (NICE clinical guideline 88; published May 2009)

We welcome evidence-based guidance published by NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) to improve the management of low back pain in England and Wales. Every year millions of people are affected by back pain and, for some, the pain can be persistent, debilitating and distressing.

Peter Dixon, Chair of the GCC, said: *“Commissioners and providers of NHS services now have a framework for a consistent evidence-based approach to the management of persistent low back pain. This is good news for NHS patients.*

“The NICE guidelines are structured and flexible and will enable the treatment to be tailored to the needs and preferences of each patient. Spinal manipulation, exercise, acupuncture, advice and cognitive behavioural therapy are recommended, as appropriate. The interventions may be provided by chiropractors, osteopaths, acupuncturists and specially trained doctors and physiotherapists.”

The NICE guideline is for health professionals in the NHS and other staff who care for people with low back pain. Its recommendations are based on the best available evidence.

When to suspect child maltreatment (NICE clinical guideline 89; published July 2009)

It isn't only guidelines on musculoskeletal conditions that are relevant to chiropractors. All health professionals have a role in protecting children and young people.

NICE has issued guidance to health professionals in the NHS who work with children and young people to help them recognise children who are at risk of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, or who are suffering from neglect.

NICE emphasises that its guidance may also be of interest to people outside of the NHS who work with children and young people, clearly this includes many of you.

Overview

Health workers have been advised to “observe” a child's appearance and behaviour for any physical signs of abuse.

If a health worker suspects possible maltreatment, they should seek an explanation from the child in an open and non-judgemental manner and consult a more experienced colleague, such as a community paediatrician or a named professional for safeguarding children. However, if there is compelling evidence that strongly suggests that a child

is being abused, they should be immediately referred to social services.

This is one of those exceptions to the general rule of confidentiality, as defined in paragraph A2.7 of the GCC's Code of Practice, when the disclosure of information to a third party would be justified because the health worker believes it to be in the patient's best interests

All actions and outcomes must be recorded.

Behaviour change (NICE public health guidance 6; published October 2007)

This guidance focuses on how NHS and other professionals help people change their behaviour so that they can enhance their health – a central concept for chiropractic care. It is also relevant for the research community and health economists working in this area.

Future NICE guidance that aims to change people's behaviour will be based on the principles in this guidance.

Obtaining NICE publications

For further printed copies of the quick reference guides, phone NICE publications on 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote the relevant references given below.

Low back pain

We circulated to chiropractors the quick reference guide that summarises NICE's recommendations. The full clinical guideline can be downloaded from www.nice.org.uk/cg88.

When requesting printed copies from NICE, quote relevant references:

- NI865 (quick reference guide)
- NI866 *Understanding NICE guidance*

When to suspect child maltreatment

We will circulate the quick reference guide to the profession. The full clinical guideline and other documents can be downloaded from www.nice.org.uk/CG89

Relevant references:

- NI900 (quick reference guide)
- NI901 *Understanding NICE guidance*

Behaviour change

We will circulate the quick reference guide to the profession. Implementation tools and further documents are available from www.nice.org.uk/PH006.

When ordering printed copies of the quick reference guide, quote: NI230.

Equality and diversity: is there a gap in our information?

As you'll know from a variety of previous communications, the GCC has a duty to ask chiropractors for information about age, disability, gender and race. This is to help us identify any potential bias affecting:

- decisions on initial registration (gender and age only)
- decisions on annual retention of registration
- complaints against chiropractors
- the outcome of investigation of complaints
- the outcome of professional conduct hearings.

Registration forms provide the data on age and gender and over 80% of the profession have completed the confidential monitoring forms covering disability and race.

From all of this we know that: ages range from 20s to 80s; 0.3% of chiropractors have declared they have a disability; 49% are female, and the profession is slightly more ethnically diverse than the general population.

Under-reporting disabilities?

So chiropractors seem to be a fairly representative group, other than possible under-reporting of disabilities compared with the number of chiropractic students who declare (for example) that they are dyslectic or have a mental health condition that is being well managed.

There are probably several reasons for this – concern about being “labelled” or thinking that the term is limited to individuals who are formally registered as disabled.

If you have already completed a form but want now to declare a disability, please contact us. And if you haven't completed a form at all yet, we'll be sending you one in the next couple of weeks.

Do you know a ‘locked out’ UK-qualified chiropractor?

There’s a new opportunity for UK-qualified chiropractors, who were locked out of GCC registration eight years ago, to apply for GCC registration.

What’s changed and who’s affected?

A recent change in UK law enables chiropractors who qualified in the UK before June 2001 to apply for GCC registration. This new law is time-limited – all applications must be received by the GCC by

1 January 2011 and applies to chiropractors who:

- were ineligible for GCC registration between June 1999 and 2001 (when the GCC’s Statutory Register was set up) because they weren’t practising in the UK and had no immediate plans to do so at the time
- achieved a qualification in chiropractic in the UK before 15 June 2001
- practised as a chiropractor before 15 June 2001
- have not practised as a chiropractor in the UK on or after 15 June 2001
- pass the GCC’s Prescribed Test of Competence after submitting their application and are deemed eligible to take the Test.

Can you help spread the word?

Within the past year, we’ve written twice about this to over 300 people who achieved a UK chiropractic qualification before June 2001 but did not apply for GCC registration in the two-year “Transitional Period” when the GCC’s statutory Register was set up. We’ve heard from about 20 people in reply.

It’s difficult to know how many of our letters reached the recipients, given that many of the addresses were up to eight years old. It’s also possible that there may be other people who we’ve been unable to identify, even with the help of the UK chiropractic degree providers and the chiropractic professional associations. As ever, one of the best methods of reaching somebody is by word of mouth.

So, if you know somebody who might be interested, please give them this article or ask them to contact Jamie Button or Beatrice Armstrong at the GCC on registrations@gcc-uk.org or + 44 (0) 20 7713 5155 for more information.

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Revalidation – an analytical approach

The introduction of a system of revalidation for chiropractic needs careful thought about the risks, benefits and costs. We are working with economists to examine them logically and in detail. In the run up to the start of this work, the GCC identified two categories of risk:

1. *The context in which care is provided*

Care is often provided on a one-to-one basis, usually outside of a “managed environment” i.e. unsupervised practice by an autonomous practitioner in an independent healthcare setting to which patients self-refer. This means that the risk to the patient is greater than if care were provided in a conventional healthcare setting and the chiropractor worked as part of a team. This risk is typically associated with the conduct of the chiropractor.

2. *Risks associated with the care provided*

For example, a chiropractor might fail to identify a serious condition in the patient. So, the chiropractor may continue to treat the patient when it would have been better to refer the patient to another healthcare practitioner for further investigation. This risk is typically related to the competence of the chiropractor and their skill in recognising potential symptoms.

Costs and benefits

So, before any system of revalidation is introduced, we must first be clear about the links between the frequency and/or detail of revalidation and:

- its cost
- its effectiveness in reducing errors and violations of best practice that impact upon public safety.

New and updated publications

Over the Summer we've published and circulated a number of publications to chiropractors. In case you missed them, they're listed below. Please contact us if you need more copies.

[Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency: effective from 30 June 2010](#)

The Code and Standard is reviewed every five years so that it remains up to date and fit for purpose.

To enable chiropractors to familiarise themselves with amendments, the GCC is required to publish any revisions to the Code and Standard 12 months before they become effective.

The current *Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency: effective from 8 December 2005*, will remain in force until June 2010.

Core principles and accessibility

The core principles of the Code and Standard remain largely unchanged; they continue to reflect the ethical practice and conduct that patients expect and that would be familiar to any regulated UK health professional.

In response to consultation feedback the design and layout of the new Code and Standard has been changed. It now contains more guidance to help members of the profession to meet regulatory requirements.

The Code and Standard must also be accessible to the public and patients. To help achieve this,

the new Code and Standard is written in plain English, for the benefit of the public, patients and the profession.

An electronic version of the Code and Standard can be downloaded from http://www.gcc-uk.org/page.cfm?page_id=15. Quick links from within the document will take you to relevant reference sources and further useful information.

[What can I expect when I see a chiropractor?](#)

The substance of our leaflet *What can I expect when I see a chiropractor?* is largely unchanged; the main difference is that we've had it "plain English" edited.

[Fitness to Practise Report 2008](#)

This is an important publication that we publish annually and circulate to chiropractors. It summarises the cases heard by the Professional Conduct Committee during the year and highlights where the chiropractors concerned went wrong. The purpose of the report is to identify learning points to enable chiropractors to review, and develop, their own practice to prevent similar occurrences in the future.

Published on www.gcc-uk.org

The GCC's Financial Statements were approved by Council in May 2009, and they can be downloaded from our website.

Obtaining GCC publications

GCC publications can be downloaded from www.gcc-uk.org and printed copies can be ordered by phoning Paul Robinson, during office hours, on 020 7713 5155 or emailing publications@gcc-uk.org.

Don't forget your free GCC publications

For your free supplies of GCC publications, including postage and packing, please contact Paul Robinson on publications@gcc-uk.org or on 020 7713 5155 during office hours.

GCC publications can also be downloaded from www.gcc-uk.org. Where indicated* some are in electronic format only and posted on our website. Please contact the GCC if you need hard copies.

GCC booklets and leaflets

[What can I expect when I see a chiropractor?](#)

For patients and members of the public thinking about seeking chiropractic care. Available in: Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, English, English-Braille, Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Urdu, Welsh

[X-ray Information Note](#)

For patients – information about the ownership of health records, including X-ray films and other medical images

[Becoming a chiropractor*](#)

For members of the public – careers information

[Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency: December 2005 \(current\)](#)

[Code of Practice and Standard of Proficiency: Effective from 30 June 2010](#)

For chiropractors, patients and the public – sets out the standards of chiropractic conduct and practice

[Fitness to Practise Report 2008](#)

For chiropractors, patients and the public – summarises Professional Conduct Committee hearings to extract key learning points for the profession

[Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\) Mandatory Requirements](#)

For chiropractors – explains how to comply with mandatory CPD

[Blood Donor Certificates](#)

For chiropractors to complete for blood donors who have recently received acupuncture or dry needling

[Who regulates health & social care professionals?](#)

For patients, the public and health professionals – information about the UK health regulators, what they do and why; published by the Joint UK Health & Social Care Regulators

[The practice of chiropractic in the United Kingdom and its contribution to the health of the nation](#)

Brief information note for GPs and others that puts into context the safety, efficacy, cost effectiveness of chiropractic and the social impact of back pain

[Musculoskeletal Pathway: Managing Acute Back Pain in Primary Care](#)

Advice for GPs, Primary Care Trusts and Local Health Boards

[Annual Report 2007*](#)

For stakeholders and others with an interest in the GCC's activities and financial statements – reviews a year's work by tabulating our core activities, setting out aims and objectives, measuring progress in the implementation of specific projects and outlining projects in the pipeline

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Dates of future meetings of General Council and minutes; findings of Professional Conduct and Health Committees; annual accounts; registration checks and other relevant information are on our website.

Webmaster@gcc-uk.org for feedback on the website.

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