



## EUROPEAN UNION OF GENERAL PRACTITIONERS

Alment Praktiserende Lægers Europæiske Organisation – UEMO  
European Union of General Practitioners – UEMO  
Europäische Vereinigung der Allgemeinärzte – UEMO  
Union Européenne des Médecins Omnipraticiens – UEMO  
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Unión Europea de Médicos Generalistas – UEMO  
Uniao Europeia de Clinicos Gerais – UEMO  
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### UEMO 2002/100

#### UK NATIONAL REPORT SEPTEMBER 2002

##### Results of National Survey of GP Opinion

In September 2001, the British Medical Association's General Practitioners Committee (GPC) sent a questionnaire to all GPs in the UK, to find out about their circumstances, attitude towards general practice and plans for the future. 55.5% of all GPs responded to the questionnaire within the deadline and the results were published in October. The results were shocking: 66.1% stated that their morale was low; 81.6% said that they were suffering an excessive level of stress; 27.8% stated that they were seriously considering leaving general practice for another career. The GPC has reported many times that general practice was in a state of crisis, but this survey gave a dramatic illustration of how "grass roots" GPs truly felt.

##### New contract framework

Against this backdrop, negotiations began between the BMA and the government on a radical new contract for general practitioners. The framework for this new contract was published in April 2002. In summary, it will allocate resources more fairly; increase investment in primary health care and practice infrastructure; ensure that new work attracts new resources; be a practice-based rather than an individual contract; predominantly consist of nationally negotiated terms and conditions but with some local flexibility; focus on and reward the quality and outcomes of care; allow more opportunities for career development; and encourage greater use of skill mix. The new contract will give GPs more flexibility in how they organise their practices and greater ability to control and manage their workload. All GP practices will provide essential services, most will provide additional services in the areas of health promotion and chronic disease management, and some will choose to provide enhanced services. A practice will be able to opt out of providing particular additional services but will not receive the allocated financial incentive. Primary Care Organisations will take over from GPs the responsibility for providing out-of-hours care. Full details of the contract framework are available on the BMA website: [www.bma.org.uk](http://www.bma.org.uk)

The contract framework was sent to every GP in the UK, and 75.8% of GPs voted in favour of using this framework as a basis for continued negotiation. A detailed and priced contract will be prepared in the forthcoming months and sent to all GPs for final approval.

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#### UEMO – PRESIDENCY

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## **Recruitment and retention**

One of the most serious problems highlighted in the National Survey of GP Opinion was the number of GPs (48%) who intended to retire before reaching 60. A recent report by the Audit Commission, the body which is responsible for auditing public services in England and Wales, agreed that there is a GP recruitment and retention crisis and found that in some inner city areas, one in five posts cannot be filled. The government is finally recognising the seriousness of this problem, and recently announced a series of financial incentives. In England, GPs who continue to work in the NHS between the ages of 60 and 65 will receive an additional £2000 per year. Newly qualified GPs will be given a "golden hello" of £5000 when they start their first substantive post, or £10000 if they work in an "under-doctored" area. Practices will also be encouraged financially to employ GPs on the retainer scheme. Whilst they are to be welcomed, the effectiveness of these measures remains to be demonstrated. Similar incentives have been introduced in Scotland and Wales.

## **General practice as a specialty**

The GPC, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Joint Committee on Postgraduate Training for General Practice will be considering their position on the development of general practice as a specialist discipline under Title III over the coming few weeks. Early indications are that support for the proposal is likely providing the following conditions set out in the UEMO resolution are met:

- GPs must retain their role as clinical generalists
- There must be adequate transition arrangements, and protection for GPs already practising under Title IV
- The financial implications on GP remuneration need to be given due consideration

The UK delegation will be able to give an update on discussions at the forthcoming UEMO meeting.