



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
Unione Europea dei Medici di Medicina Generale – UEMO
Europese Huisartsen Vereniging - UEMO
Unión Europea de Médicos Generalistas – UEMO
Uniao Europeia de Clinicos Gerais – UEMO
Euroopan Yleislääkärijärjestö – UEMO
Europeiska Allmänläkarorganisationen – UEMO



UEMO 2003/107

IRISH NATIONAL REPORT 2003

There have been many developments in the field of General Practice and Medicine in Ireland.

1. Benchmarking.
2. New National Pay Agreement – *Sustaining Progress*.
3. Out-of-Hours Co-operatives.
4. Workload Reviews.
5. Over 70's Agreement.
6. GP Doctor Units.
7. GP Trainers' Contract.
8. Public Health Doctors' Dispute.

1. Benchmarking (General Medical Services Scheme)

The GMS is the scheme which pays General Practitioners for their public service work.

A meeting of the IMO/employer Joint Working Group took place on the 22nd January 2003. The parties failed to reach agreement on terms of reference for the process.

UEMO – PRESIDENCY

c/o Swedish Medical Association, P.O. Box 5610, Villagatan 5, SE-114 86 Stockholm
Tel: +46 8 790 34 52, Fax 46 8 20 57 18, E-mail: info@uemo.org

The IMO wanted the Joint Working Group to conduct a review of fees and allowances under the GMS Scheme utilising the methodologies adopted in parallel Benchmarking exercises within the Public Sector and that findings/agreements would be implemented in no less favourable a manner than those grades receiving parallel Benchmarking increases/awards.

The IMO stated that there were a number of items which have been the subject of previous agreement and these would have to be implemented by the beginning of the IMO AGM in April 2003, namely,

- the agreement on behalf of Programme Directors/Assistant Programme Directors of GP Vocational Training Schemes,
- a 5% special increase on DMO pensions,
- and an arbitration hearing in respect of the 1999 Over 70's agreement.

In addition, the IMO sought completion of the workload reviews underway in respect of the Primary Childhood Immunisation Scheme and Non EU Nationals and the implementation of the remunerative adjustments agreed prior to April 2003.

The IMO has indicated that on the basis of agreement being reached on the above, the Organisation would also be prepared to enter into a review of an agreed list of publicly funded primary care services.

Following the meeting on the 22nd January 2003, Mr Conal Devine, Independent Chairperson, Joint Working Group subsequently outlined the IMO's formal position to the employer side and we are awaiting their response.

The Organisation wrote again to the HSEA on the 14th February 2003 requesting confirmation that the HSEA will honour the commitments entered into in respect of the inclusion of GMS GPs in Benchmarking. The Organisation outlined that it will not accept any less favourable treatment on behalf of GMS GPs and will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that GPs are given the same access to a parallel Benchmarking process as other groups that have not been part of the main Benchmarking process. It is understood that the management (HSEA) team met again on the 8th April 2003 to consider the IMO's position and the Organisation is awaiting a comprehensive response from the Health Service Employers Agency.

2. New National Pay Agreement – *Sustaining Progress*

Following negotiations between employers, trade unions and Government representatives (the Social Partners), agreement has been concluded on a new national pay agreement entitled *Sustaining Progress*.

The pay agreement proposes an increase of 7% over 18 months, with an initial 6-month pay pause, as follows:

- 3% from 1 January, 2004
- 2% from 1 July, 2004
- 2% from 1 December, 2004

UEMO – PRESIDENCY

c/o Swedish Medical Association, P.O. Box 5610, Villagatan 5, SE-114 86 Stockholm
Tel: +46 8 790 34 52, Fax 46 8 20 57 18, E-mail: info@uemo.org

In association with these increases, and, subject to the implementation of a modernisation programme for the public service, the Public Service Benchmarking awards would be implemented as follows:

- 25% backdated to 1 December, 2001
- 50% from 1 January, 2004
- 25% from 1 June, 2005

The national pay agreement commits both employers and trade unions to promoting stable industrial relations but does not contain a no-strike clause and includes timescales within which employers must respond to and deal with claims and grievances raised by trade unions.

3. GP Out-of-Hours Co-operatives

In November 2002, the HSEA outlined its initial response to the IMO's claim in respect of GP Co-op development as put forward by the IMO at a meeting on the 25th September 2002. The HSEA claimed that it was not in a position to meet the Organisation's claim. Management has proposed that payment for the provision of General Practice out-of-hours Co-operative services to GMS patients should be based on the existing Special Type Consultation fees. Payment in respect of private patients would continue to be a matter of private contract between the GP and the patient. In making this proposal, management has also drawn attention to the Government's significant investment in General Practice Out-of-Hours Co-operative infrastructures. This investment is in excess of €25 million to date and is set to continue in 2003. HSEA asked for the Organisation's consideration of its proposal.

In response to a motion from the 2002 AGM, the Minister outlined in a letter to the IMO, dated 28th February 2003, stated that an amount of €19.9m had already being allocated to health boards to fund General Practitioner out-of-hours Co-operatives in 2003. Of this amount, some €7.7m was new additional funding to allow for the ongoing full year costs in 2003 of co-operatives that started in 2002. This brought investment in this area to over €45m since 2000.

4. Workload Reviews – Non EU Nationals / Immunisation Scheme

The Organisation received the final report on the workload review in respect of Non EU Nationals from the HSEA in March 2003. Mr James Doran's final report indicates a significantly increased patient workload associated with Non EU Nationals in the order of 6 – 12 times the average workload arising from a visitation rate of 3 to 4 times the average and the duration of consultations being 2 to 3 times the norm. The Organisation has lodged a claim with the HSEA for an appropriate adjustment in fees in respect of these patients. The Organisation is awaiting a response to its claim from the Health Service Employers Agency. Failing a satisfactory response from health service

employers, the Organisation may be seeking the support of members for limited industrial action in order to ensure a satisfactory outcome to this matter.

The Organisation received a draft report from Mr James Doran in respect of the workload review of the Primary Childhood Immunisation Scheme in February 2003. The Organisation is awaiting receipt of the final report. The draft report indicates a very high workload associated with the Scheme and will form the basis of a claim by the IMO for a review of the fees under the Scheme.

5. Arbitration Hearing on 1999 Over 70's Agreement

It was agreed that Mr James Doran would arbitrate on a dispute between the IMO and Department of Health & Children regarding the interpretation of the 1999 Over 70's Agreement.

The parties made written submissions to Mr Doran and an oral hearing took place on the 4th March 2003. The basis of the IMO's claim was that the 1999 Over 70's agreement provided that the capitation rates in respect of GMS patients Over 70 be recalibrated by an amount of €35,000 in each of three years (1999, 2000 and 2001). The cumulative effect of such an increase would be that the annual increase would be €1.9m per annum by year three.

Mr Doran presented the findings of his Arbitration Hearing on the 21st March 2003. GPs are owed approximately €3.2 million in retrospective payments up to December 2002 under the terms of the findings and approximately €800,000 per annum in increased capitation payments on an ongoing annual basis.

6. GP Unit Doctors

A further meeting took place with the Department of Health & Children/Health Service Employers Agency on the 6th November 2002 to progress negotiations on a review of the role of GP Unit Doctors and their terms and conditions. GP Unit Doctors are employed to liaise between the Health Boards and GPs. Agreement was reached on the establishment of a Joint Working Group between the IMO and management to draw up an agreement on the future role and structures of the GP Units. The IMO submitted a discussion document on the future of GP Units in early December 2002. A further meeting of the Joint Working Group at which management presented its discussion document followed this. It was agreed that Mr Tadhg O' Brien, on behalf of the management side, would draw up a composite document and this would be followed by a further meeting of the Working Group. The IMO is awaiting receipt of a composite document from the employer side. A further meeting to progress negotiations will take place in the coming weeks.

7. GP Trainers Contract

UEMO – PRESIDENCY

*c/o Swedish Medical Association, P.O. Box 5610, Villagatan 5, SE-114 86 Stockholm
Tel: +46 8 790 34 52, Fax 46 8 20 57 18, E-mail: info@uemo.org*

A meeting took place between the IMO and the HSEA / Department of Health & Children on the 6th November 2002 to commence negotiations on a national contract for GP Trainers. It was agreed that a Joint Working Group be established to progress negotiations on a contract. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group took place on the 15th January 2003 at which it was agreed that both parties would work to develop a draft contract for GP Trainers. A second meeting of the Joint Working Group took place on the 19th February 2003 at which the IMO presented a draft job description for GP Trainers. It was agreed that the Department of Health & Children would prepare a draft contract for GP Trainers prior to the next meeting.

8. Public Health Doctor's Dispute.

The Public Health Doctors voted to return to work on June 20th after a ten week strike. The core of the dispute was the refusal of the Department of Health and Children to implement pay and condition awards dating from as far back as the mid 1990s.

The IMO successfully negotiated a settlement in the following areas.

- **Programme for Co-Operation and Work.**
 - Payments due to public health doctors under the local bargaining clause of the PCW and Partnership 2000 (national wage and productivity agreements negotiated by the Social Partners) have been referred to an agreed third party for adjudication, to be concluded without delay.
- **Brennan Report**
 - It was agreed that the implementation of the Brennan Report's (on financial controls in the health sector) recommendations would be incorporated into the process under point above.
- **Interim Out of Hours Service**
 - Following the conclusion of the process on the two points above and on return to work, the parties agreed to enter into immediate discussion with a view to agreeing an interim structured out of hours service. These discussions will be concluded not later than 30th September 2003.
- **Consultant Status, Remuneration and Out-of-Hours.**
 - It was agreed that the issue of consultant status and remuneration for the grades of Director of Public Health and Specialists in Public Health Medicine be referred to the next Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Service. It is also agreed that this Body addresses the linked issue of a formally structured out-of-hours cover arrangement. The implementation of the Body's findings will be on a no less favourable basis than that of the other grades covered by the review body.