

AGREEMENT ON CERTAIN MATTERS RELATING TO GENERAL PRACTICE

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From: Department of Health and Children

To: Chief Executive Officer of Each Health Board

Re: Agreement on certain matters relating to General Practice

I refer to an Agreement reached in April (but formally concluded some time later) between the Health Services' Employers Agency and the Irish Medical Organisation on certain matters relating to general practice and the General Medical Services Scheme. The purpose of this Circular is to formally set out the terms of that Agreement which are, as appropriate, to be incorporated into the GMS Scheme contract for services.

Immunisation Grants

The one-off grant payable under this provision will relate to the centre of practice involved with pro rata adjustment in respect of larger practices, that is practices having more than 3 partners. The grant will be for a maximum of £1000 expenditure on the basis of vouched receipts only.

Where Health Boards have already made contributions to the purchase of relevant equipment, the amount of that contribution will be deducted from any claim made, as appropriate.

Discretionary Medical Cards

Pending an examination of this area, which will incorporate the findings of the medical card eligibility review, a sum of £2m is being provided in the present year under this heading in respect of a notional figure of 20,000 discretionary medical cards. That money will be allocated on a pro rata basis in respect of individual contracted doctors GMS Scheme patient panels as at 1 January 2001 and this provision is effective from that date.

The examination referred to will commence in the current year and will be concerned, inter alia, with determining the nature and extent of discretionary medical cards in the GMS scheme. In the event of it not having been completed by year end, with appropriate agreed alternative arrangements put in place that fairly reflect the outcome of the examination, the sum of money referred to above, adjusted in line with applicable national pay round adjustments, will again be provided in 2002 and allocated on the same basis of patient panels as on 1 January of that year. Payments under this heading will be superannuable.

Asylum Seekers

A one-off superannuable registration fee of £100 per relevant patient will be paid to doctors in respect of each such patient on their GMS Scheme panels on 1 April 2001. A relevant patient is, for the purposes of this provision, one who at that time is registered with the appropriate

immigration authorities as an asylum seeker. This provision will similarly apply in respect of asylum seekers registering for the first time with a contracted doctor under the GMS Scheme subsequent to that date.

For the avoidance of any doubt, there will be one registration payment only in respect of any one asylum seeker.

This provision will not be applicable in respect of any asylum seeker or seekers where any Health Board or other State Agency has already made a special arrangement with a contracted doctor or doctors in relation thereto. In the context of this provision, a special arrangement means any fee or other scheme of remuneration outside of the normal capitation scheme. However, a contracted doctor having such a special arrangement may opt for the registration provision provided under this agreement where it is more favorable. In such an instance, the amount of the registration fee to be paid will have regard to any amount already paid under the aforementioned special arrangement.

Primary Childhood Immunisation Scheme: Workload Review

It is agreed that the workload involved in the new arrangements under this scheme will be assessed as the earliest element of an overall workload study to be undertaken as part of the wider general practice review. The terms of reference of the workload review will be agreed between the parties.

Practice Nurse and Secretaries

The existing scale of allowances in respect of both categories is being amended from 1 January of this year.

In the case of a Practice Nurse, the following tiered allowance structure will apply:

£18,000, £19,000, £20,000, £21,000 to a Practice Nurse having one, two, three and four years relevant nursing experience with an allowance of £22,000 being applicable in respect of such a person having at least 3 years experience of practice nursing either in that practice or other practices.

In the case of a Practice Secretary, the following tiered allowance structure will apply:

£12,000, £13,000, £14,000 to a Practice Secretary having one, two and three years relevant experience (that experience to be certified by the contracted doctor claiming the allowance in respect of the Secretary concerned).

Practice Nurse and Practice Secretary Establishment Grant

A sum of £0.5m will be made available under this heading.

Medical Indemnity

It was accepted by all sides to this agreement that the Health Boards were applying the formula set out in the relevant Circulars in the manner provided therein and that the matter of concern to the IMO on this issue related to the application of tax law. Accordingly, it was agreed that the Revenue Commissioners would be consulted jointly by the parties with a view to formally clarifying the position, under tax law, as regards the existing and possible other treatments of medical insurance premiums and refunds.

District Medical Officers - Guaranteed Salaries

In the case of such persons the guaranteed actual salary would, from 1 January 2001, be that

applicable for notional pensions purposes for former permanent DMOs. These revised salary provisions are intended to apply in respect of 28 GPs mainly in remote areas.

Training Grants

Outstanding training grants in respect of the training year 1997/1998 will be paid to applicable contracted doctors in the usual manner associated with the payment of these grants.

Temporary Residents/Non Rota Patients/E1-11

From 1 April 2001, the payment to be made under this heading shall be on the basis of an STC corresponding to that applicable under the out of hours framework of the GMS Scheme capitation arrangements.

Out of Hours Review

The IMO have agreed to participate in a full review of the position in relation to out of hours (as envisaged and provided for in the March 1998 agreement). That review to commence as soon as possible.

Budget Announcement: Automatic Medical Card Eligibility for those aged 70 and over

Having regard to the conclusion of this agreement, the IMO have agreed to participate in discussions aimed at ensuring the agreed and timely introduction of the Budget measure. These discussions to begin as soon as possible.

(A separate Agreement on this matter was concluded and is the subject of a specific Circular.)

The Future Development of General Medical Practice

In recognition of the need to ensure the proper and fullest development of general practice, and in a spirit of positive partnership, the IMO have agreed to engage with the Department of Health & Children in the consultative stage of the review exercise being undertaken by the Department on the future development of general practice.

Any queries in relation to this Agreement should be made to the GMS Division of this Department.

Eamon Corcoran
Principal
GMS Division
31 July 2001