



Watchdog warns pay review body over use of unpublished seven day working data

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The UK's statistics watchdog has advised the Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration (DDRB) to ensure that any evidence it uses is in the public domain, in response to a complaint over its use of unpublished data to support the case for seven day services.

The UK Statistics Authority issued the recommendation after the DDRB used unpublished analyses from NHS England in a 2015 report on proposed changes to consultants' and junior doctors' contracts to facilitate the government's wish for seven day working.¹

The authority has previously called on the Department of Health for England to improve the "trustworthiness, quality, and value" of the data it produces on seven day services.²

In an email sent to Ben Dean, an orthopaedic registrar, in July this year, the authority's director general for regulation, Ed Humpherson, said that the DDRB was not obliged to comply with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.³ But he said that the authority encouraged compliance with the code whenever data were being used to inform decision making. He added that one of the code's key principles was to make statistics, sources, and underlying methods accessible to all.

"In the context of the DDRB's report on seven-day working, we note that Table 2.1 of the document was based on

unpublished analyses provided by NHS England, which were not available for wider scrutiny at the time the report was itself published," Humpherson said.

He added, "I have written to the Office for Manpower Economics to recommend that the DDRB, and the other pay review bodies, in future should check whether the sources of evidence presented to them are in the public domain; provide fuller citation details, including links to supporting data; and in particular make clearer where data quoted in their reports are unpublished."

Dean had written to the authority asking what it would do about the DDRB's use of unpublished data.

- 1 Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration. Contract reform for consultants and doctors & dentists in training: supporting healthcare services seven days a week. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/445742/50576_DDRB_report_2015_WEB_book.pdf.
- 2 Rimmer A. Health department must improve "trustworthiness" of seven day service data, Statistics Authority says. *BMJ Careers* Nov 2016. http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/Health_department_must_improve_%E2%80%9Ctrustworthiness%E2%80%9D_of_seven_day_service_data%2C_Statistics_Authority_says
- 3 Humpherson E. Letter to Dr Ben Dean. 17 Jul 2017 <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/DDR-Ed-Humpherson-to-Ben-Dean.pdf>.

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