

Mr Clarke claims contract is "good news for good GPs"

"There is nothing being proposed in the new contract that some general practitioners are not doing already." Thus commented the Secretary of State for Health when he announced on 16 October that he was laying the regulations necessary to introduce the contract from 1 April 1990. The regulations were laid before parliament on 16 October and MPs have 21 days to pray against them to precipitate a debate. The simplified arrangements for patients to change their doctor will come into effect on 7 November if the regulations are approved.

The regulations are based on the agreement reached with the general practitioners' negotiators on 4 May and mirror *The 1990 Contract* that Mr Kenneth Clarke sent to all general practitioners in August. One of the government's main aims in the contract was to introduce proper incentives for all doctors to reach the standards of the best. Acknowledging the help he had received from the General Medical Services Committee, which has been scrutinising the regulations, Mr Clarke referred to the concessions that had been made during negotiations:

- The general practitioners' 26 hour availability to patients will include travelling time
- The five day working week will take account of, for example, hospital sessions
- Staggered targets for childhood immunisations and cervical cytology
- New arrangements for part time working
- Two year transitional payments scheme to enable small list practices to adjust to the new arrangements.

The secretary of state emphasised that the negotiations had not been about how much general practitioners were paid; that was the job of the review body on doctors' and dentists' remuneration. They had been about what the government was entitled to stipulate that doctors should do in return for that pay. He refuted, during questions at his press conference, that doctors would have less time for their patients, that small practices would go broke, that doctors were being directed clinically, or that he had made concessions because of the bad press he had received.

For the first time, his Minister of Health, Mr David Mellor interposed, there would be a difference in pay between innovators and traditionalists in general practice.

Once the regulations have been approved and the review body has priced the new contract the revised statement of fees and



Dr J B Lynch, a general practitioner in Clwyd, north Wales, and one of the general practitioners' national negotiators, has been elected chairman of the Welsh council

allowances will be sent to all general practitioners.

Profession's good will squandered, warns GMSC chairman

At a press conference in BMA House later in the day the chairman of the GMSC, Dr M A Wilson, said that general practitioners objected to the manner in which the secretary of state had used his legal powers to impose the contract. There had been no proper negotiating meeting since 4 May. He believed that Mr Clarke was squandering the good will of the profession—a resource that could not be priced. Contrary to the secretary of state, Dr Wilson said that the contract would deter recruits to general practice and would lead to larger list sizes with doctors having less time for patients.

Opposition to cardiac surgeons' assistant post

The Joint Consultants Committee decided in July not to oppose the appointment of a non-medically qualified cardiac surgeons' assistant because it was a pilot project, would be reviewed regularly, and no further appointments would be made for three years (29 July, p 328.) The person appointed would have limited responsibility for stripping veins and would be under the continuous supervision of the consultant.

Both the Central Consultants and Specialists Committee and the Hospital Junior Staff

Committee have expressed concern about the appointment. Despite the assurances several speakers at the CCSC criticised the appointment, pointing out that it created a precedent not only in surgery but in other disciplines as well. Mr D Cairns reminded the committee that when a vet had assisted at an operation recently there had been a public outcry.

The HJSC opposed the idea whether as an experiment in the Oxford region or elsewhere. Dr D Tomson (from the Northern region) said that it was dangerous to suppose that such an appointment would reduce juniors' hours; it would be more likely to undermine junior doctors' status. There were already moves to reduce the number of fully trained paramedical staff by introducing generic health workers with no formal qualifications.

In Wessex the view was that the appointment would be the thin end of the wedge, Dr T McKinstry reported.

DMOs slotting into directors of public health posts

In many districts district medical officers have already been slotted into the post of director of public health. After the publication of the Acheson report *Public Health in England* the Department of Health issued guidance to health authorities on public health appointments. The secretariat of the Control Committee for Community Medicine and Community Health circularised district medical officers, and in the 99 (out of 189) replies received so far, 79 directors have been appointed and 71 of these were formerly the district medical officer. In eight districts the director was appointed after advertisement.

The replies also showed that 29 consultants in communicable disease control had been appointed and that 50 were planned.

A follow up questionnaire will be sent to those districts which have not yet replied. Any district medical officer whose position is threatened by implementation of the new arrangements should contact the BMA.

Correction

Too fast a pace on white paper

The first sentence of the seventh paragraph in the report from the CCCMCH (October 7, p 922), should read, "Aberdeen Royal Infirmary [not the Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh] hoped to become self governing, but Dr M Murchison was uncertain whether this would require the full support of the majority of clinicians or whether the proposal would need the support of clinicians, managers, and health board." We apologise for this editorial error.

BMA NOTICES

Members proposing to attend meetings marked * are asked to notify in advance the honorary secretary concerned.

Division Meetings

Ayrshire and Arran—At Halfway House, Symington, Wednesday 25 October, 7 for 7 30 pm, Mr Christopher Morran: "Update on pancreatic disease." 8 pm, Dr Brian Donaldson: "Paediatric developmental assessment."* (Followed by dinner.)

Brighton—At Sussex Postgraduate Medical Centre, Elm Grove, Tuesday 24 October, 8 pm, Dr Alex Sakula:

"Medical eponyms A to Z."* (Preceded by buffet supper 7 pm, followed by agm.)

Bristol—At Bristol Cathedral, Sunday 22 October, 10 am, St Luke's Tide service, preacher Dr Wesley Carr. At Postgraduate Medical Centre, Southmead Hospital, Wednesday 25 October, 6 30 for 7 pm, buffet supper and installation of president, Dr Ian Bailey: "In search of Hippocrates."*

Burton on Trent—At Stanhope Arms Hotel, Tuesday 24 October, 7 30 for 8 pm, dinner meeting, speaker Mrs Sylvia Martin: "National Trust properties which can be visited within the Burton area." (Wives, friends welcome.)

East Berkshire—At Windsor and District Postgraduate Centre, Tuesday 24 October, 7 30 pm, musical evening.* (Followed by supper.* Guests welcome.)

Fife—At Dean Park Hotel, Kirkcaldy, Friday 27 October, 7 30 for 8 pm, annual dinner dance.* (Guests invited.)

Great Yarmouth and Waveney—At Burrage Centre, James Paget Hospital, Wednesday 25 October, 7 30 pm, update from London conference on self governing hospitals.* (Coffee and sandwiches available.)

West Sussex—At St Richard's Hospital Postgraduate Centre,

Thursday 26 October, 7 for 7 30 pm, Dr Tony Hicklin: "The 1990 contract: an update."* (Supper available.)

COMING EVENTS

Institute of Biology—Symposium "AIDS: a challenge in education," 29 November, London. Details from Jeremy Grange, AIDS conference at the institute, 20 Queensberry Place, London SW7 2DZ.

Poisons Unit, New Cross Hospital—Meeting "Toxicology and the courts," 9 January 1990, London. Details from Dr R J Flanagan at the unit, Avonley Road, London SE14 5ER. (Tel 01 955 5095 ext 4015.)

Institute of Psychiatry Addiction Research Unit—Course "Helping smokers give up," 7-9 February 1990, London. Details from Ms W Boyle of the unit, 101 Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AF. (Tel 01 703 5411 ext 3447.)

International Society for Prosthetics and Orthotics—Annual scientific meeting 4-6 April 1990, Edinburgh. Details from Dr D J Pratt, Orthotics and Disability Research Centre, Derbyshire Royal Infirmary, London Road, Derby DE1 2QY. (Tel 0323 47141 ext 560.)

Tavistock Clinic—Details of courses commencing 1990 are available from the organisers, Tavistock Clinic, 120 Belsize Lane, London NW3 5BA. (Tel 01 435 7111.)