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Distribution of faulty and out of date PPE is “national scandal,” says BMA

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The head of the BMA has called reports that faulty and out of date personal protective equipment (PPE) was distributed to healthcare workers “a national scandal.”

In March, NHS England reassured NHS trusts that their PPE had passed stringent tests that demonstrate they are safe. In the same month, however, it was reported that GP practices had been sent out of date face masks.¹

In June, *Pulse* magazine reported that the government had told GPs to throw away batches of out of date face masks distributed to practices after finding they posed a risk to staff.²

Commenting on the news, BMA Council chair Chaand Nagpaul said, “These reports, if true, are nothing short of a national scandal.

“If doctors and health and care workers have been supplied with, and worn, faulty, re-dated masks, this is clearly a dereliction of the duty to ensure the safety of NHS staff and patients. Suggestions that these faults were known in May, and yet action is only now being taken, are alarming.”

The government now needs to answer questions about how these masks were distributed and allowed to be used, Nagpaul said. “Crucially, we need a cast iron guarantee that no faulty or out of date PPE is currently on the front line or in community care.

“Every single item of faulty PPE should now be withdrawn and replaced with sufficient equipment that is in date—not re-dated—and with rigorous quality control measures to ensure these properly protect health and care staff.”

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said, “The safety of frontline staff has been a priority throughout this unprecedented pandemic. After being made aware of a defect with some Cardinal Health Type IIR surgical masks, we urgently gave advice last week to health and care providers to check if their stock included these masks and to dispose of them. The matter is now resolved.”

1 Leclere M. Coronavirus Kent: GPs sent “out of date” protective masks after new labels stuck over batches sent to surgeries. www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/gps-sent-out-of-date-protective-masks-224059.

2 Pearce C. Face masks used by practices found to be “a risk to staff.” www.pulsetoday.co.uk/news/face-masks-used-by-practices-found-to-be-a-risk-to-staff/20041085.article