



Royal College of  
General Practitioners

# Leading the Way High-Quality Care For All Through General Practice

A Manifesto for Patient Care 2010



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General Practitioners

# Our vision



Photo by Tim Clarke

At the heart of general practice is the relationship GPs have with patients. We provide them with lifelong care.

Patients want personalised care from a GP they know and who knows them. This is the best, most cost-effective way to deliver health services – GP care for a whole year costs less than a single day's hospital admission.

Over 95% of patient contacts with the NHS occur in primary care. On an average day, more than one million GP consultations take place.

Strong general practice, delivering health care that patients need and want, is the way forward. The RCGP is committed to improving the quality of care provided by primary care teams. GPs have a leading role to play in health promotion and prevention, as well as managing and treating disease.

Any political party coming into power in any of the countries of the UK faces enormous, unprecedented financial pressures. Our health service faces a huge challenge: responding to reduced funding without reducing the quality of the services we provide, or the quality of the care our patients deserve. It is a daunting prospect.

GPs and their primary healthcare teams are a key part of the solution. The RCGP – the largest medical royal college with over 38,000 members – is up for the challenge and is already leading the way in showing how high-quality, cost-effective care can be available to all, based on clinical need and not an individual's ability to pay.

Professor Steve Field CBE FRCP FRCGP  
Chairman of Council



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The RCGP believes  
that implementing the  
following proposals  
will help produce  
a healthier society:



# High-quality GP care for all

## **THE RCGP CALLS FOR:**

### **1. GPs to have more time with their patients**

The ageing population means that more patients will have long-term and increasingly complex conditions. They will need more time with their GP to discuss their care and treatment options. We call for the average consultation time between a patient and his or her GP to be increased.

### **2. The GP–patient relationship to be maintained and improved**

GPs deliver personalised and continuous care for patients and their families. We want to improve patients' access to high-quality care even more. We call on politicians to recognise the importance of the practice list – it strengthens the relationships that GPs have with their patients and allows them to target care to those who need it most.

### **3. Better round-the-clock care for patients**

Every patient deserves high-quality care in and out of hours. GPs must be more involved in local decision making and in the commissioning of out-of-hours services to deliver the highest-quality care around the clock.

### **4. Longer training for GPs**

Patients deserve high-quality care wherever they live in the UK. More care is moving into the community. As the GP's role extends, so must the length of training be extended. This will give GPs the skills and confidence they need to manage more patients and their complex problems closer to home.

### **5. Better services for socially excluded groups**

We call for action to address the primary healthcare needs of socially excluded groups. These include people with learning disabilities, travellers, offenders and the homeless, who experience poor health outcomes including self-reported health, life expectancy and illness.



# Care for patients closer to home

## **THE RCGP CALLS FOR:**

### **1. More care to be provided in the community**

More health care should be provided in the community rather than in hospitals. This will need a significant transfer of resources into primary care so that services can be focused on the needs of local populations.

### **2. Practices to work more closely together**

This will enable them to pool resources and expertise to provide a wider range of clinical services for their patients, closer to where they live. The RCGP supports the development of 'Federations' of practices based on local need.

### **3. Better and faster access to diagnostic tests**

Patients should not have to wait to go to hospital for diagnostic tests that could be done in the local community. GPs should also have direct access to hospital-based tests, including magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and computerised tomography (CT) scans.

### **4. Better skill mix in primary care**

Patients deserve high-quality services close to where they live. GPs should work as part of enhanced primary care teams. These will include nurses, health visitors, midwives, community physiotherapists and pharmacists. Specialists including elderly-care physicians and community paediatricians should also be encouraged to work as part of the team providing more integrated care in the community, focused on the needs of the patient.

### **5. GPs to continue to play a key role in the care of patients and their families from cradle to grave**

GPs must continue to have a key role in ante- and post-natal care, the health of children, care of adults and those at the end of their life.

# Improving the health of the nation

## **THE RCGP CALLS FOR:**

### **1. Action to promote healthy lifestyle choices and tackle rising obesity levels**

We support the promotion of healthy eating and initiatives to increase physical activity to help people of all ages increase their levels of health and fitness.

### **2. Action to prevent the harmful effects of alcohol misuse and smoking**

We call for:

- a minimum price per unit of alcohol
- clearer labelling on all alcoholic drinks, with graphic pictorial warnings
- a ban on smoking in motor vehicles (including private cars) with young children
- plain packaging for tobacco products
- a targeted education campaign to increase the number of smoke-free homes by 2015.

### **3. Better access to talking therapies**

Patients with depression and anxiety should be supported through better access to psychological therapies. We call for improved access to all talking therapies, including cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), for adults and children.

### **4. Support to help people remain in or return to work**

This will help improve the mental, physical and economic wellbeing of individuals. The RCGP is running an education programme across the UK to increase GPs' knowledge, skills and confidence in dealing with clinical issues relating to work and health. We call for continued support for this work.

### **5. Action to tackle climate change**

Patients' health will benefit through long-term initiatives that help alleviate climate change. The RCGP is developing a web-based tool to enable practices to calculate their carbon footprint and pinpoint areas where their environmental impact can be reduced. We support the work of the NHS on sustainability and call for more initiatives in primary care.

### **6. More support for UK Armed Forces veterans**

The RCGP works closely with Defence Medical Services (DMS) to promote seamless transfer of care for injured service personnel leaving the Armed Forces. We call for more NHS engagement to support the unique physical and psychological rehabilitation and social needs of our military veterans.



The RCGP is the largest medical royal college. It aims to encourage and maintain the highest standards of general medical practice and to act as the 'voice' of GPs on issues concerned with education, training, research and clinical standards. Founded in 1952, it has over 38,000 members who are committed to improving patient care, developing their own skills and promoting general practice as a discipline.

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