

## **BMA press release**

### **Doctors attack Government's vindictive treatment of consultants**

The British Medical Association [BMA] today (Thursday 30 March 2006) said it was astonished at the vindictive and petty treatment of consultants by awarding them a phased below inflation, pay rise.

The independent Doctors Dentists Review Body [DDRB] has recommended a pay award of 2.2 per cent for most doctors. Staff and associate specialist grade doctors have been awarded 2.4 per cent. However, the government has awarded consultants a phased pay rise of 1 per cent until 1 November 2006 and then increased to 2.2 per cent for the rest of the financial year – resulting in an average annual award of 1.4 per cent.

Dr Paul Miller, Chairman of the BMA Consultants' Committee said: "I cannot believe the Government has been so mean-minded. This low pay rise will do very little to relieve NHS debt but will damage doctors' goodwill enormously. Doctors have worked tirelessly to meet Government targets and deliver improvements in patient care, helping to bring waiting times down to record levels. Hospital consultants have huge and complex workloads. They strive to innovate whilst facing unprecedented demands on their time and an intensity of work which is soaring. It is deplorable that the DDRB recommendation has not been accepted by the Government. This slap in the face is a betrayal of senior hospital doctors and will alienate the profession at a time when the NHS is under enormous pressure. It produces a saving of £20 million, this will do very little to ease the NHS debt crisis of around £900 million."

Mr James Johnson, Chairman of the BMA said: "It is shocking that the Government has chosen to single out consultants in this way. It is like saying they are not as worthy as other doctors. The Government has lost far more today in goodwill than it has gained in salary costs. We are two years away from the end of 7 per cent real terms growth per year for the NHS. There are only two years left to sort out the mess which the NHS is currently in and what does the Government do? Punishing senior doctors is a crazy strategy for getting us to work with Government on system reform, and at a time when we should be formulating an action plan to save the NHS."

Mr Johnson attacked the blatant interference of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the independent Doctors and Dentists Review Body process. "After all evidence had been submitted to the DDRB from all parties both the Health Secretary and the Chancellor subsequently suggested lower pay rises."

Pay for junior doctors will rise by 2.2%. Dr Jo Hilborne, chairman of the BMA's Junior Doctors Committee, said:

"Despite long hours and increasingly intense working patterns, take-home pay for junior doctors has been falling, and they deserve far more than this. I'm appalled by the way the government has treated our consultant colleagues. This sends the message to doctors that they're to blame for the failure of NHS managers to balance the books. Not only that, but the government has blatantly interfered with a process that is supposed to be independent of politics."

Hospital doctors in the staff and associate specialist (SAS) grades are to receive a pay rise of 2.4%. Mr Mohib Khan, chairman of the BMA's Staff and Associate Specialists Committee says:

"The average SAS doctor works 73 hours a week for the NHS and most of this time is spent in direct clinical care. Despite this, we've seen the disparities between our pay and those of our colleagues grow wider. While this award acknowledges that we have been disadvantaged, it certainly doesn't go far enough to satisfy a group of doctors who haven't had a significant pay rise for years."

Self-employed GPs [the majority] are not covered by this DDRB award, but salaried GPs and GPs in training are.

Dr Hamish Meldrum, Chairman of the BMA's General Practitioners Committee said: "The award for GPs in training and their educators, does no more than mark time, when, given the intentions in the Government's White Paper, we need to attract and train more doctors for general practice. We're also disappointed that the DDRB hasn't seen fit to improve the relative position of salaries GPs."

In its evidence to the DDRB, the BMA said a pay rise of 4.5 per cent was needed to reward doctors fairly. The Department of Health claimed a rise of 2.5 per cent would be sufficient but after all evidence had been submitted, Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt intervened and said a 1 per cent pay rise would suffice. The Chancellor also intervened in the review body process by suggesting a 2 per cent rise.

Ends

**Notes to editors:**

To read the BMA's evidence to the DDRB click here:

[/www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/ddrbev2005](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/ddrbev2005)

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