



Help us to protect the traditional role of the GP

Dear Doctor,

Pulse is launching an important joint initiative with Newcastle and North Tyneside LMC, whose secretary is Dr George Rae.

We would like you to help us conduct a national survey to find out which aspects of general practice patients value most. It won't take up much of your time – but it could have a major impact in the battle to protect the very essence of what it means to be a GP.

There can be no doubt that the traditional role of the GP is under threat on several fronts. Fragmentation of care via walk-in centres, NHS Direct, community matrons and a raft of other schemes; plans to give private companies contracts to run essential services; uncertainty about the future of registered lists; the rise of tick-box medicine at the expense of interpersonal care; the drift towards a system where patient choice trumps all other agendas; and the erosion of respect for the role of the GP generalist – the list could go on.

One of the best ways to counter this threat will be to confirm that patients share GPs' values about the importance of continuity of care from a GP they know – and this survey is designed to do just that. The questionnaire has been independently audited to ensure it is rigorous and unbiased.

Results from 600 patients in Newcastle and North Tyneside have already shown that patients value the same aspects of traditional general practice as GPs do – the place of a GP they know as the central co-ordinator of their ongoing care, with care based on practice populations.

If, together with your help, we can replicate these findings in a national survey, we can take an immensely powerful message to the politicians and policymakers who seem to have forgotten the very values that general practice embodies. A strong patient endorsement of those values could be a crucial tool in the battle to protect your future role.

Overleaf you will find a simple guide to conducting the survey in your practice. We would be very grateful if you could help.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Johnson'.

Phil Johnson
Editor

Guidelines for running the patient survey in your practice

On the following two pages you will find a copy of the patient survey questionnaire devised by Newcastle and North Tyneside LMC, whose secretary is Dr George Rae. The questions have been independently audited to ensure they are rigorous and unbiased.

Please follow these steps to conduct the survey in your practice:

- 1** Put your practice stamp in the relevant box on the front of the questionnaire.
- 2** Photocopy the following two pages to produce as many survey forms as you think you can use. Keep this copy blank in case you need more.
- 3** Leave the survey forms in your waiting room or ask your receptionists to hand them out when patients arrive.
- 4** Please get as many patients in your practice to complete the questionnaire as you can – but aim for at least 25.
- 5** If possible, try to aim for a roughly equal balance of responses between the five age groups. You could ask your receptionists to help by handing out the form to equal numbers of patients in each age range.

Deadline for return of completed survey forms: June 24, 2005

Return your completed forms for independent analysis to:

Patient Survey, Pulse,
CMP Information,
Ludgate House,
245 Blackfriars Road,
London SE1 9UY

**If you have any queries or need any further advice, e-mail us at:
pulse@cmpinformation.com**

Patient views on family doctor (GP) services

We are interested in your views on how GP services are provided. This questionnaire is anonymous, and should take no more than a few minutes to complete. Please hand your completed form to the reception desk.

Which age group do you belong to?

- ₁ 15–30
- ₂ 31–45
- ₃ 46–60
- ₄ 61–75
- ₅ over 75

1 Family doctor (GP) services have changed a lot over recent years. Do you think the overall quality of the service has improved? (Please tick one)

- ₁ Yes
- ₂ No
- ₃ Unsure

2 When you go to the doctor, how important is it that you see a GP you know? (Please tick one)

- ₁ Very important
- ₂ Important
- ₃ Not important
- ₄ It depends on the problem

3 How important is it to you that you continue to be looked after by the same GP? (Please tick one)

- ₁ Very important
- ₂ Important
- ₃ Not important

4 New computer technology means that any doctor who is treating you will be able to find your records and check your medical history. Do you think this is a good idea? (Please tick one)

- ₁ Yes
- ₂ No
- ₃ Unsure

5 When you need medical advice are you: (please tick one)

- ₁ Happy to see whoever is available
- ₂ Would prefer to see a particular GP

6 If you prefer to see a particular GP, is this usually possible within a reasonable time?

- ₁ Yes
- ₂ No

7 If you needed an *urgent* appointment, how quickly could you be seen by your GP? (please tick one)

- ₁ Immediately
- ₂ Within three hours
- ₃ Within six hours
- ₄ Next day
- ₅ Within two days
- ₆ Not for several days

8 If you needed an appointment with a doctor, which of the following would you most prefer?
(put 1 in the box next to your first choice, 2 for your second choice etc)

- ₁ To see your own GP within 48 hours
₂ To see a practice nurse more quickly
₃ To see another GP from your practice within 24 hours
₄ To see a doctor at a drop-in clinic immediately

9 Is access to a local hospital providing quality treatment within an acceptable timescale important to you?
(please tick one)

- ₁ Very important
₂ Important
₃ Reasonably important
₄ Not important

10 In the future your GP will offer you a choice of five hospitals when she/he refers you to hospital. How important is that to you? (please tick one)

- ₁ Very important
₂ Important
₃ Reasonably important
₄ Not important

11 Which of the following is most important to you when it comes to choice of hospitals?
(put 1 in the box next to your first choice, 2 for your second choice etc)

- ₁ To go to my nearest local hospital
₂ To go to the hospital with the shortest waiting times
₃ To go to the best hospital, no matter how far away
₄ To go to a hospital I know well

The rest of the questionnaire is a list of statements. We want to know whether you agree or disagree with them. Please tick one box for each that best sums up your view. Some of the questions will not apply – please just tick ‘does not apply’.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Does not apply
12 All health care should be provided by the NHS	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
13 In the light of recent scandals public trust in doctors has gone down	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
14 If private firms can provide care cheaper than the NHS, the Government is right to use them	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
15 It is important for GPs who are treating you to know you and your family history	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
16 It is more convenient to be able to go to a drop-in clinic outside work hours	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
17 I can get good advice from a pharmacist	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
18 I would ring NHS Direct for medical advice	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
19 For many small medical problems, I am happy to see the practice nurse	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅
20 When I need a doctor to visit my home out of normal hours, it is acceptable if it is a doctor I have not met.	<input type="checkbox"/> ₁	<input type="checkbox"/> ₂	<input type="checkbox"/> ₃	<input type="checkbox"/> ₄	<input type="checkbox"/> ₅

Please add any other comment you have about your family doctor service

Thank you very much for filling in this questionnaire