

Press Releases

GOVERNMENT WIDENS REVIEW INTO HEALTHCARE REGULATION

Lead: John Reid

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A new review into the regulation of a broad range of healthcare professions will consider changes to the measures dentists, pharmacists, nurses and other health professionals undergo to check they remain fit to do their jobs. The review, announced today by Secretary of State John Reid, is a further move to help protect the health and well-being of patients.

The Department of Health has already announced that the Chief Medical Officer for England, Sir Liam Donaldson, will carry out a review of the revalidation of doctors and related matters, following concerns expressed by Dame Janet Smith in her 5th Report from the Shipman Inquiry.

Today's review, which starts immediately, will cover dentists, pharmacists, nursing and midwifery, opticians, osteopaths and chiropractors, as well as the 13 professions covered by the Health Professions Council (HPC). Over 800,000 NHS and private sector staff are regulated in these professions. The review will also consider implications for other health care staff.

Regulation today involves making it an offence to call yourself a member of the profession unless you are registered. The regulator sets standards for entry and conduct, and also removes individuals from the register where they fall short of the standard.

John Reid said:

"Patients rely on a team of health professionals during their care, not just doctors. Ensuring there are proper measures to test doctors' fitness to practise is only one part of assuring the safety of patients.

"Many lessons emerging from the Chief Medical Officer's review of revalidation and the role of the GMC will have implications for the regulation of other healthcare professions and vice versa."

"This new review will complement the work being

undertaken by the Chief Medical Officer. It will help enable us to put in place comprehensive and consistent measures to ensure all professionals treating patients remain fit to practise."

The review will consider and advise Ministers about the measures needed to:

- strengthen procedures for ensuring that the performance or conduct of non-medical health professionals and other health care staff does not pose a threat to patient safety or the effective functioning of services, particularly focusing on the effective and fair operation of fitness to practise procedures;
- ensure the operation of effective systems of continuing professional development and appraisal for non-medical health care staff and make progress towards regular revalidation where appropriate;
- ensure the effective regulation of health care staff working in new roles within the healthcare sector and of other staff in regular contact with patients

In addition, the review will consider whether any changes are needed to the role, structure, functions and number of regulators of non-medical healthcare professional staff.

There will be an advisory group, which will include experts from non-medical regulators and from the NHS. A larger reference group, which will include education and training bodies, professional organisations, and consumer and healthcare interest groups, will contribute to the review's findings.

The review will report by the end of 2005 and will inform the department's plans to improve patient protection.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Membership of the advisory group will include the following members, together with representatives of the devolved administrations.

Andrew Foster (Chair) Director of Workforce, DH
Chris Beasley Chief Nursing Officer
Kay East Chief Health Professions Officer
Prof Sue Hill Chief Scientific Officer
Prof Raman Bedi Chief Dental Officer
Dr Jim Smith Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Jane Wesson Chairman, CHRE

Sandy Forrest Director, CHRE
Steve Barnett Director, NHS Employers
Alastair Henderson Deputy Director, NHS
Employers
Jonathan Asbridge President, NMC
Sarah Thewlis Chief Executive, NMC
Norma Brook President, HPC
Marc Seale Chief Executive, HPC
Nic Greenfield Deputy Director- Workforce, DH
Steve Catling Head of Professional Standards,
DH
Harry Cayton Director of Patient and Public, DH

2. The Health Professions Council (HPC) is responsible for the regulation of 13 professions. These are:

- Arts Therapists
- Biomedical Scientists
- Chiropodists/Podiatrists
- Clinical Scientists
- Dietitians
- Occupational Therapists
- Operating Department Practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Prosthetists & Orthotists
- Radiographers
- Speech & Language Therapists

3. On 27 January 2005, the Department of Health announced that the Chief Medical Officer for England would carry out a review of the revalidation of doctors and related matters, following concern expressed by Dame Janet Smith in her 5th Report from the Shipman Inquiry.

4. For media enquiries ONLY please contact Matthew Ward in the DH Media Centre on 020 7210 5222. For general enquiries / non-media enquiries, please contact 020 7210 4850.