

Do patients think GPs should be paid for performance?

July 8 2011



A study has found that patients were surprised that a pay-for-performance scheme rewarded GPs for simple tasks such as recording blood pressure, suggesting that it should focus on more complex issues.

The findings, to be presented today at the 40th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society for Academic [Primary Care](#) hosted by the University of Bristol's Academic Unit of Primary Health Care, explore patients' views of pay-for-performance in primary care.

Kerin Hannon, Stephen Campbell and Professor Helen Lester of the University of Manchester asked twenty-six 'QOF pilot' practices across England, representative in terms of size and deprivation, to contact patients on a single QOF (Quality and Outcomes Framework) disease register.

Fifty-six patients aged 32- to 90-years (mean age 65) were interviewed from January to March 2011. All had at least one chronic condition that predated QOF. None had heard of QOF and few had noticed changes in their care since 2004. However, the majority of patients were reassured by the use of the computer in their consultation and liked the fact the GP was checking up on health issues unrelated to their presenting complaint. A minority also noted they were now more likely to be called in for a blood test or medication review.

Most patients were surprised to hear their practice was paid money for 'simple things' and wondered why GPs were paid bonuses in view of their high salaries or were not paid bonuses for managing more complex issues. Some patients also raised concern over potential unintended consequences of pay-for-performance such as a reduced focus on non-incentivised areas and a lack of consideration of individual differences in treatment.

Kerin Hannon, Research Associate in Manchester's Health Sciences Research Group, said: "Most [patients](#) trusted and liked their GP and did not feel that a pay-for-performance scheme was necessary to ensure quality of care."

A constant comparative methodology was used to analyse the transcripts. The generalisability of this study is limited by the participants' age and possible respondent bias.

More information: Paper: Patients' views of pay-for-performance in primary care by Kerin Hannon, Stephen Campbell and Professor Helen Lester. www.sapc.ac.uk/index.php/conference-a-events

Provided by University of Bristol

Citation: Do patients think GPs should be paid for performance? (2011, July 8) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-07-patients-gps-paid.html>

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