

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 ON FRIDAY, 19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER**

**NEW CHECKS FOR DOCTORS IN WORLD FIRST PATIENT SAFETY  
BOOST**

Doctors in the UK are to become the first in the world to have regular assessments to ensure that their training and expertise are up-to-date and that they are fit to carry out their roles, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt announced today. The General Medical Council will work with employers to implement and manage the system.

The skills involved in treating patients, who often have an increasing number of complex conditions, the different options for treatment, and the technology involved in modern medicine has increased dramatically in recent decades. There are now over 90,000 technologies in use across the NHS and thousands of new pieces of medical research are published on a frequent basis.

The new system, called medical revalidation, will help doctors keep up to the standard expected of them by ensuring they stay up-to-date with the latest techniques, technologies and research. This will be important in making improvements in the early diagnosis and survival from diseases such as cancer and the better care of patients with conditions such as dementia, which is still poorly diagnosed. It will also ensure doctors are better equipped to help people with long term conditions manage their health better.

Revalidation will also require a doctor to tackle any concerns with important skills such as communication and maintaining trust with patients – which is particularly important when caring for the increasing number of older patients that the NHS treats.

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said:

“We want to have the best survival rates in Europe for the major killer diseases. Doctors save lives every day and making sure they are up to speed with the latest treatments and technologies will help them save even more. This is why a proper system of revalidation is so important.”

The Government is also proposing that in future, there is one national list of general practice doctors, dentists and ophthalmologists approved to provide NHS primary care services.

At the moment, each of the 151 Primary Care Trusts keeps individual local lists of clinicians – which means if a poorly performing doctor is removed from one list, they can move to a different area and keep practicing. A national list will ensure that patients are better protected from the small minority of doctors, dentists and ophthalmologists who fall short of the high standards expected of them.

Jeremy Hunt added:

“It is right that information about a doctor moves with them around the country as they do. By introducing a single national performers list, poor performers will no longer be able to slip through the gaps between different local lists.”

Medical revalidation will normally happen every five years and will apply to all doctors in all settings in the UK - including doctors working as locums and in the private sector. Doctors will undergo annual appraisals based on the requirements of the GMC's core guidance Good Medical Practice. A responsible officer, who is usually the Medical Director will make sure that doctors have access to a good quality appraisal every year and that any issues from that appraisal are addressed. They will also review those appraisals and make a recommendation to the GMC about the doctor's continuing fitness to practise every five years. The decision regarding renewal of a doctor's licence to practise will be made by the GMC.

Professor Sir Peter Rubin, Chair of the GMC said:

“This is an historic day for patients and for the medical profession. We are confident that the introduction of revalidation will make a major contribution to the quality of care that patients receive and will give them valuable assurance that the doctors who treat them are regularly assessed against our professional standards.”

Regular checks were first recommended over 30 years ago. The Shipman Inquiry in 2004 set out that revalidation is a key driver in improving patient safety and an important means to make sure that patients are receiving consistent, good quality care.

The Department of Health has worked extensively with the General Medical Council, the Royal Colleges, employers, patients groups and the British Medical Association to ensure that the revalidation strikes the right balance and does not take up a disproportionate amount of a doctor’s time. The new system has the support from the medical profession, having undergone an extensive programme of testing and piloting, involving over 4,000 doctors.

ENDS

#### Notes to Editors

1. For more information and case studies, please call the DH Press Office on 0207 210 5947.
2. The GMC decision on whether or not to renew a license will take into account the recommendation from a responsible officer – usually a Medical Director in an organisation - responsible for making sure that clinicians are fit to practise. The responsible officer will make this recommendation after reviewing evidence from a doctor’s annual appraisals. This evidence must include examples of quality improvement activity, any significant events, feedback from colleagues and patient feedback and a review of any complaints and compliments from patients.
3. The Performer’s List consultation can be seen here [www.dh.gov.uk/liveconsultations](http://www.dh.gov.uk/liveconsultations)

4. Summary Hospital-level Mortality Indicator (SHMI) data can be seen here: <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/statistics-and-data-collections/hospital-care/summary-hospital--level-mortality-indicator-shmi>