To note

Work of the Standards and Ethics Committee

Issue

1. Update on the activities of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

Recommendation

2. To note the current work of the Standards and Ethics Committee (paragraphs 6-21).

Further information

3. If you require further information about this paper, please contact us by email: gmc@gmc-uk.org or tel. 0161 923 6602.
**Background**

4. The Board has previously been given reports on specific aspects of the work of the Standards and Ethics Committee, including: the development of learning materials about caring for people with learning disabilities; the new guidance *Treatment and Care Towards the End of Life*; and the review of *Good Medical Practice*.

5. This paper provides an update on the current work programme of the Committee.

**Discussion**

6. The main work of the Committee has been to oversee the implementation of guidance, to develop new ways of embedding this guidance in doctors' practice, and to manage the updating and review of existing GMC advice.

7. To help inform this work, the Committee has commissioned research into doctors’ attitudes to GMC guidance, providing information about how it is used, how helpful it is to them, and how they would like to see the guidance and its supporting materials developed. A brief over-view of the findings is at Annex A.

**Review of Good Medical Practice**

8. In October 2010 Council set up a Working Group of Council members to take forward the review of *Good Medical Practice*. The Working Group has met three times, in January, April and May. It has conducted an initial consultation on the scope and style of *Good Medical Practice* to which 68 organisations and 2,029 individuals responded. As a result of this consultation the Working Group has agreed to test whether the current guidance can successfully be reorganised under the four domains used in the Framework for Assessment and Appraisal.

9. The initial consultation was designed primarily for organisations and individuals who already know and use the guidance. A programme of work to engage with patients and the public, and particularly groups that do not usually respond to consultations, has been developed. This includes focus groups and other events for members of the public.

10. Web pages devoted to *Good Medical Practice* were launched in May 2011. The content of the pages are updated each month to address new subject areas. These web pages include articles and think pieces, polls and discussions and are intended to promote discussion and consideration of the issues covered in *Good Medical Practice*.

11. With the Strategy and Communication Directorate we have also developed a programme of work using Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to develop engagement with patients and the public. We launched the Facebook site in July 2011.

**Guidance on Child Protection**
12. The Working Group on Child Protection, chaired by Lord Justice Thorpe, was set up in June 2010 to draft guidance for doctors on their role and responsibilities in protecting children. In 2010 the Working Group issued a call for written evidence, focusing on the barriers to doctors’ involvement in child protection, and on the experiences of professionals and parents of the current procedures.

13. In January 2011 we held 24 oral evidence sessions to complement the written evidence submitted in 2010. This involved 37 organisations representing doctors, social workers, nurses, and lawyers, parents and children, as well as government departments, medical defence organisations and others, and 14 individuals who asked to give evidence (11 of the 14 were doctors). Following the formal sessions we held further meetings with organisations and individuals who were unable to attend a session in January. We also had discussions with parents who had been involved in child protection procedures, who had needed support in caring for disabled children.

The Working Group has considered the evidence submitted together with reviews of reports on high profile cases, media coverage of the issues, and the views of parents and children on their experiences of child protection. These sources of information have informed the draft guidance, which was launched for consultation in June 2011. We would welcome further responses, particularly if specific problems facing doctors in training could be highlighted. The consultation ends on 14 October 2011.

Review of Management for Doctors

14. We have continued to review the guidance Management for Doctors. The Working Group, Chaired by Professor Dame Joan Higgins, developed a draft for consultation, which more directly addressed the responsibilities of all doctors in relation to the management of resources, working effectively with colleagues, and leadership, as well as identifying the additional duties of doctors with formal management roles. The Working Group also reviewed the existing guidance Raising concerns about patient safety, and extended this to include both the obligation on all doctors to raise concerns, and the responsibilities of doctors in management roles to act when concerns were raised with them.

15. The draft guidance Good Management Practice: Guidance for All Doctors and the supplementary guidance Raising concerns about patient safety and Writing references were issued for consultation in March 2011. Comments were invited from individuals through a short questionnaire, while a longer version was designed for use by organisations. We also attended events across the UK to promote the consultation and to receive views, especially from patients and the public. We have received 208 written responses to the consultation, 115 to the long questionnaire and 93 to the short questionnaire, which was aimed at individual doctors.

16. The responses are being analysed and the guidance will be reviewed in the light of the comments.

Supplementary Guidance: Making and Using Audio and Visual Recordings of Patients
17. A review of the supplementary guidance on making and using recordings of patients was nearing completion in 2010 when a problem in relation to the law relating to making recordings of human tissue came to light. This was discussed and resolved with the Human Tissue Authority early in 2011. The guidance was published in April 2011 and came into effect on 9 May 2011.

Supplementary guidance: Prescribing

18. The Committee has reviewed the existing guidance on prescribing, focusing on issues of common concern, including:

   a. ‘Remote prescribing’, for example prescribing through the internet or over the telephone.
   b. Prescribing ‘off-label’ or unlicensed drugs.
   c. Self-prescribing and prescribing for family members or others with a close personal relationship.

19. The guidance was issued for consultation in April 2011 for a six week period. 210 responses were received, and these are now being analysed. The proposed change to the guidance on prescribing ‘off-label’ and unlicensed drugs has been the most controversial issue. We are currently seeking legal advice and will be discussing the issue further with the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry and other government, medical and patient organisations.

Learning Disabilities project

20. In 2010 we developed the core content of learning materials for doctors working with patients with learning disabilities through the use of forum theatre. A film of the short play used to engage with doctors, patients and others has been used as the core of the learning materials, including interactive materials. The website also includes a wide range of video clips, providing advice from GPs, psychiatrists, speech and language therapists and patients themselves. There are also extensive references to useful guidance produced by other organisations.

21. The website will be launched in the autumn.

   Recommendation: To note the current work of the Standards and Ethics Committee.

Resource implications

22. No resource implications arise from this paper.

Equality

23. We consult widely on all our guidance with particular focus on equality groups. An Equality Impact Assessment is also undertaken for each project.
Communications

24. This paper will be published on our website.