

Professor Paul Cosford CB

Director for Health Protection and Medical Director
Public Health England
Wellington House
133-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

cc: NHS England

30 January 2017

Requests to prescribe antivirals for the prophylaxis of influenza in care homes

Dear Professor Cosford

The BMA is continuing to hear of examples where GP practices are being told by local public health officers that they must prescribe oseltamivir to all residents in a care home following a person contracting influenza within that home. In some cases we've seen evidence of GPs being threatened with GMC referral if they do not comply.

It is unacceptable that these requests continue and that there is still no properly commissioned service to fulfil this work.

As we have previously stated, GMS regulations are clear that this service is not included under essential services that practices are required to provide for their registered patients. Essential services are defined in the GMS regulations with reference to regulations 15(3) (5) (6) and (8). Additional work must be commissioned and funded separately as an enhanced service.

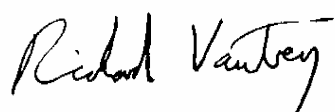
GP practices cannot be expected to do work that is not resourced, nor should they be threatened or their goodwill be exploited, simply because of a failure to commission a national or local service. Practices are under huge workload pressure and cannot be told to do more without this further impacting on the quality of care to their existing patients. Can I therefore ask you to directly instruct local public health teams to stop making unreasonable requests of practices.



Your guidance published in October 2016 is clear that if a decision is made to prescribe antivirals for the prophylaxis of influenza, therapy should be started within 48 hrs of exposure. This means that a service should be commissioned which could respond in an evening, at a weekend and on Bank Holidays. It is unfortunate that the working group that produced your guidance did not include any GPs, as if it had they would have been able to help you to respond to this issue as part of your guideline development.

I hope that you agree that this issue now needs rapid resolution and I hope that we can work together to do that as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Vautrey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Dr Richard Vautrey
Deputy Chair, General Practitioners Committee