

Advice from GPC March 2005

Medical reports for gyms and health clubs

As a result of the NHS campaign to encourage the general public to take more exercise, there have been a number of queries about GPs' obligations to provide medical reports to certify fitness to exercise and how to respond to requests for information from gyms and patients advised to see their GP before using the gym facilities.

In most cases the statement of patient's fitness from a GP is required for the liability insurance cover of the health club or gym. It is the BMA view that unless there is a direct clinical referral of the patient to the gym/health club as part of the patient's rehabilitation programme, then a charge is reasonable. This service is not covered under the new GMS contract and therefore the GP should be properly remunerated for the work which often involves the screening of the full patient medical record. The BMA is able to suggest fees for this work which can only be done by the patient's own GP or other attending doctor. The BMA suggested fee for this work is currently £11.50 for a straightforward certificate of fact and £19.50 - £41.50 for more complex certificates. Revised fees are due to be announced shortly. The GP does have the discretion to waive the fee after considering the implications to the doctor-patient relationship.

Where a gym or health club instructor is concerned about the health of one of its members, for example high blood pressure, it would be good practice for the gym to put details of the concern in writing to the GP. However, the gym should seek written consent from the patient before sharing this specific information.

Noted: This does not address Gloucestershire LMC concern and advice given to our constituents that GPs could be liable if something goes wrong when patient exercises.