



Message from MSC Chair

Welcome to the May edition of the Medical Student Committee Newsletter. We produce these updates regularly to give you information about our work on your behalf. We want to ensure that you have the best and most relevant information possible and that you have confidence that the MSC is working for you. This newsletter, together with our guidance notes, student BMA News and the work of your local MSC representatives and Intra-School Committee, will I hope be a first step towards that.

We do want to know what you think so please get in touch with us if you have any comments or views.

Emily Rigby

MTAS

Many of you will be aware by now of the breach of confidentiality in relation to final year medical students' applications for FY1 posts through the Medical Training Application Service (MTAS) electronic application system, which was reported on 25 April. The section of the MTAS website containing personal details of final year medical students was not secure and therefore was accessible by anyone. Once the problem was pointed out the site was closed.

The MSC is seriously concerned about who might have had access to this information and how the breach happened in the first place. We have:

- demanded a full and thorough investigation
- evidence that steps will be taken to ensure this does not happen again
- been in regular contact with the MMC team and are waiting for further information about how this happened, how many people may have been affected and how this is now being dealt with. This will help us decide how best to pursue the matter.

At the time of writing the site remains closed. We have been informed by the Department of Health that the website will remain closed until they can be assured that the site is secure. An investigation is also being carried out into how many people were able to access the information and who these people were. We will let you know as soon as we hear further about the plans.

Legal Implications

The security breach could affect final year medical students who have applied to FY1 posts through the MTAS system. This should not affect applications as the breach happened after the application process was complete. However there are potentially

serious implications in relation to access to confidential information

The BMA has taken advice about any legal implications of the breach for individual medical students. Our conclusion is that there has been a clear breach of the Data Protection Act.

There are two courses of action:

- An application to the Information Commissioner:
 - The Information Commissioner has no power to award compensation.
- Application to the organisation which has breached the DPA or, alternatively, to the courts.
 - To claim compensation, as a general rule, an applicant must demonstrate loss. Compensation will not generally be awarded for distress.

At the current time it is unclear whether there would be any loss how many people were able to access the website and who these people were. Once we are clear of the extent of the breach we will be able to decide how best to take this further. We are in constant contact with MTAS about this. If you believe you have suffered any sort of loss as a result of the problems please contact us:

- AskBMA – call askBMA on 0870 60 60 828
- Your BMA representative at medical school. If you do not know who this is, details are available on our website
- MSC at info.students@bma.org.uk

We are still pressing for other improvements to the MTAS system this year and will be taking part in a review of MTAS for FY1 later this month. We will be using the results of our foundation programme survey. This has provided us with excellent information to help us press for the improvements you want to see so our thanks to everyone who completed and returned the survey.

MTAS for Speciality posts

The breach of security does **not** affect those junior doctors applying to specialty training posts. Our junior doctor colleagues are as you will be aware experiencing huge difficulties of their own in relation to the application process. Although the problem does not affect our colleagues, clearly the breach further undermines any confidence there may have been in the system. The Chairman of BMA Council, James Johnson, has written to the Prime Minister highlighting the problems and the BMAs serious concerns about these. A letter has also been circulated to all members of the BMA about the wider problems with MTAS. You can find further information at: <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/content/HubMTAS>

Blood Borne Viruses

The Department of Health has issued guidance *Health Clearance for tuberculosis, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV: New healthcare workers*. At present it is unclear how this guidance, as it relates to students, is going to work in practice. It is widely accepted that it is completely inappropriate for students to attempt exposure prone procedures, yet the guidance notes there may be times when we do this sort of work. We are concerned that this could open the way for mandatory testing of students by their colleges on a "just in case" basis. That is something we would be totally against. Proper information and support for any student undergoing testing is a must and if a student chooses not to be tested then that decision cannot be allowed to affect their future training. We will be working on this issue with others in the BMA and will keep you posted.

Surveys

Education and Welfare survey – has now been sent out to a sample of medical students. If you receive it please complete it. It's vital that we have your views so that we can press for improvements to the system on your behalf.

Finance survey – Please complete this survey if you receive it. It is absolutely crucial that we have a high response rate so that we have hard evidence to lobby effectively on student funding and junior doctors' pay, as well as to identify the types of students who particularly lose out under the current system.

Review of the Bursary Scheme

Discussions between the MSC and the DH, along with other trade union stakeholders are still ongoing to review those parts of the scheme that will need to be improved including travel. We will keep you posted about this. In the meantime for further information about our work on this go to our website www.bma.org.uk/students and look under 'student finance'.

Tuition fees

The MSC Chair, Emily Rigby and Finance Deputy Chair, Manil Malawana are due to meet Bill Rammell, Minister for Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education. The main objective of the meeting is to look at the figures relating to the numbers of graduates entering medicine from September 2006. We have concerns that many will be put off applying because of having to pay up-front tuition fees. We will be looking at a breakdown of the socio-economic backgrounds of graduates

entering medicine. We are still waiting from the relevant data from UCAS.

Up-front fees – contact your MP! – In order to put pressure on the Higher Education Minister so that he can ensure that measures are in place to allow graduates entering medicine to defer top up tuition fees, you can write expressing your concerns direct to your MP. For further information, please go to:

<http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/campagainstgradstudentspayingupfrontfees?OpenDocument&Highlight=2>

Medical Students Conference

The annual Medical Students Conference took place in Nottingham on 30 and 31 March 2007. The conference was lively and very well attended by representatives from each medical school together with MSC reps. There were speeches from Sir Graham Catto, president of the General Medical Council, and Prof Parveen Kumar, president of the BMA. Motions submitted from each medical school were debated and those passed will now be taken forward as part of the MSC work policy for next year.

Elections to MSC

We are currently receiving nominations for elections to MSC and ISC. A copy of the nomination form was circulated with the April edition of Student BMJ and has been made available on our website. The deadline is 9 May. We will be running elections in your medical school throughout the summer. Please take part in these elections and vote for your choice of candidate. It is important that you have a say as the person elected will be representing you at a national level on MSC.

Guidance notes

Focus on... Medical School Charter

Focus on... MTAS

Focus on... MTAS information

Focus on... MSC

Guidance for students with dependents:

Look for these on our website at www.bma.org.uk/students

Dates of Future Meetings – 2006/07 session

Your rep will be coming along to the next meeting of the MSC on Monday 4 June. Get in touch with your rep before the meeting if you would like them to raise any issues on your behalf. You can find details at [www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/ Content/ Hubmeetyourmedicalstudentrep?OpenDocument&Login](http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubmeetyourmedicalstudentrep?OpenDocument&Login)



Join the BMA!

Becoming a student member is easy and will benefit you in so many ways. The BMA provides high quality support, advice and information during your training and throughout your career. We can help you on matters relating to personal and professional finance, and provide support for your future and that of the medical profession. For more information go to: <http://www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/jointheBMAstudentmembership>

To join go to: <http://www.bma.org.uk/join>

Further help and advice

If you have any enquiries about any of the issues in this newsletter, contact your MSC representative and your ISC Chair. Details can be found on our website at www.bma.org.uk/ap.nsf/Content/Hubmeetyourmedicalstudentrep?OpenDocument&Login

You can also contact the MSC office on: Info.students@bma.org.uk



For advice and support, BMA members can also contact askBMA (tel: 0870 60 60 828, email: askBMA@BMA.org.uk anytime from 8.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday (except UK-wide bank holidays). If your query is judged to be complex it will be referred to the appropriate national or local office. For all other queries, either contact the relevant BMA department, the BMA's head office or the appropriate national office – full details are available on the website and in *Your BMA – a guide to membership services and benefits*.



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www.bma.org.uk/askbma