



"...excluding locums"

Introduction	2
Areas for Action.....	3
Appendix 1:: Current data	4
Appendix 2 :: NASGP group survey July 2008	5
Appendix 3 :: replies to requests for data	6
Reply from the NHS Information Centre http://www.ic.nhs.uk	6
Reply from the GMC	6
Reply from MPS	6
Info from RCGP.....	6
Reply from Office of Health Economics.....	7
GP Appraisal and CPD School of Postgraduate Medical & Dental Education, Cardiff University	7
From Northern Ireland	7

Introduction

No-one seems to know how many GP locums there are in the UK. All data pertaining to the number of GPs in the UK states "excluding locums". Adding up the figures for fully qualified GPs working in the UK (i.e. excluding GP registrars) we arrive at a figure of 41,460 (see table 1) - 17. The GMC publishes the total number of GPs registered on their database and arrive at a figure of approximately 57,000 (changes daily). The difference between the two suggests the total number of locum GPs, and this figure is approximately 15,500.

15,756 registered GPs represent 28% of the UK's GP workforce, yet none of these GPs appear anywhere on any official government statistics.

A total figure for all Sessional GPs i.e. non-practice based GPs (salaried, retainers and locums) is 22,500 – that's **40% of all GPs!**

This raises many questions, including:

1. How does the profession represent these GPs?
2. Will this have an effect on the resources allocated for Revalidation?
3. Assuming the Department of Health does not know about these GPs, then how can it make plans for future manpower resources and training?
4. If 28% of all GPs practise out with traditional salaried posts or partnerships, what is the profession and Department of Health doing to engage these 15,756 GPs into the clinical governance systems of the NHS?

28% of all GPs work outside a managed organisation; the government and profession needs to ensure that its resources are allocated equitably, and reassurance given to patients that the quality and professional welfare of its locum GPs is not being ignored.

Areas for Action

1. The NHS Information Centre must oversee the accurate collection of GP numbers across the UK.
2. Establishing easily accessible frameworks within which locum GPs can work within managed environments, such as the NASGP's [Sessional GP Support team](#) and [affiliate Freelance GP Scheme](#).
3. All GP locums should be issued with prescribing numbers, to both allow them to collect personal prescribing information, and to prevent the continuing corruption of the current 'personal data' of conventional GP partners and salaried GPs on whose behalf locums are currently prescribing.
4. The formation of a Quality Locum Award by the RCGP to match their Quality Practice Award that's already in existence for partners in practices.
5. Elevating the professional representation of GP locums, with other employed GPs such as salaried GPs, with, for example, their own Sessional GP committee of the BMA rather than the current subcommittee of the General Practitioners Committee (itself a subcommittee of the BMA).
6. Specific training for GP trainees on how to work as a Freelance GP.

Appendix 1:: Current data

Table 1 - practice-based GPs

Source	Date	locale	salaried	Total	notes
NHS IC ¹	2007	England	6,022 (17.7%)	33,929	<i>excludes registrars² and locums</i>
Welsh Assembly ³	2007	Wales	n/a ⁴	2,009	<i>excludes registrars⁵ and locums</i>
iSD Scotland ⁶	2007	Scotland	408 (9.2%)	4,412	<i>Excludes registrars⁷ and locums</i>
NI CSA ⁸	2006	NI	n/a	1,110	<i>Unrestricted principals or equivalent</i>
Total		UK		41,460	
GMC ⁹	2008	UK		57,216	<i>Excludes registrars; includes locums</i>
				15,756	<i>Total UK GPs excluding principals, salaried, retainers and registrars</i>

Table 2 - results of locum questionnaires

locale	Practice-based GPs	locums	as %	notes
England	33,929	?	?	
Wales	2,009	677	25%	
Scotland	4,412	(1187/3542)	25%*	<i>of ¾ of all Scottish GPs counted</i>
NI	1,110	398	26%	
UK	41,460		28%	

¹ <http://www.ic.nhs.uk/webfiles/publications/nhsstaff2007/gp/GP%20Bulletin%201997-2007.pdf>

² Registrars 2,491; number of retainers included in total = 565

³ <http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/theme/health/general-medical/?lang=en>

⁴ "other" = 158

⁵ Registrars 165; number of retainers included in total = 73

⁶ <http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/4606.html>

⁷ Registrars = 316; number of retainers included in total = 178

⁸ http://www.centuralservicesagency.nhs.uk/files/medical_statistics/file/GP_Gender_Age2006.pdf

⁹ <http://www.gmc-uk.org/register/search/stats.asp>

Appendix 2 :: NASGP group survey July 2008

In July 2008 NASGP surveyed 65 independent sessional GP groups across the UK to see how many individual members were affiliated to their group. 26 groups responded:

Max no. of members	340
Min no. of members	9
Average no. of members	76
Average no. at a meeting	14
Total no.	1965

Appendix 3 :: replies to requests for data

Reply from the NHS Information Centre <http://www.ic.nhs.uk>

Unfortunately we do not collect data on locum numbers. The only suggestion I can make is to contact the General Medical Council.

Reply from the GMC

The medical register is constantly being updated. We have included a statistics page on our website that will give you information that is publicly available.

<http://www.gmc-uk.org/register/search/stats.asp>

Reply from MPS

Not the sort of information [we] collect.

Info from RCGP

Number of GPs (Headcount), UK, 1995-2005

	1995	1997	1999	2003	2004	2005	% Change 1995-2005
England	28,869	29,389	29,987	32,593	34,085	35,302	28.29
N. Ireland	1,005	1,039	1,054	1,076	1,078	1,084	7.9
Scotland	3,879	4,026	4,070	4,311	4,480	4,538	17
Wales	1,741	1,819	1,860	1,893	1,931	1,952	12.12
UK	35,494	36,273	36,971	39,873	41,574	42,876	20.8

Note: England figures exclude GP Retainees; N.Ireland figures exclude GP Registrars.

Source: General and Personal Medical Services Statistic, 2005. Leeds: Information Centre for Health and Social Care, 2005.

For more detailed GP workforce and practice information please see the RCGP [Information Sheet](#) on [General Practice in the UK](#), as well as the RCGP Factsheet, [Profile of UK Practices](#). Both were written in 2006 and so may be a

little outdated. We are currently in the process of upgrading them so you may want to check back in a few months if you are looking for more current figures.

Reply from Office of Health Economics

Having looked at the information that we hold on General Medical Practitioners, I'm afraid that it would appear that we do not hold information on GP locums.

The information that we hold seems to include GP registrars (trainees) but excludes GP retainers. There is no mention in any of the relevant table footnotes of GP locums.

I am afraid, therefore, that I am in this instance unable to provide you with the figures that you require. We obtain the information from the Information Centre(IC) in their General and Personal Medical Services Statistics.

Information Centre: Tel: 0845 300 6016

Email: enquiries@ic.nhs.uk

GP Appraisal and CPD School of Postgraduate Medical & Dental Education, Cardiff University

According to our database, reconciled with the MPL, the total number of sessional GPs in Wales is **677**. ...the ones I identified are those who are NOT affiliated to any particular practice so yes would predominantly be locums...

From Northern Ireland

At 1st October 2008 we have **396** locums in Northern Ireland.