

23 March 2010

Lord Eden of Winton  
House of Lords  
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Dear 

**Oral Question on Out-of-hours Cover – 10 March 2010**

In response to your supplementary question about adequate communications out-of-hours, I said:

“One of the recommendations that the coroner made in the recent case was about having a national system for communications that would operate out of hours. We are working with the medical organisations to develop that national database and to consider what data should be placed on it.”

I would like to clarify that when reporting on the deaths of David Gray and Iris Edwards, the coroner William Morris did not make recommendations about a database of out-of-hours communications. He made the following recommendation:

That the Department of Health institute a national database of doctors from abroad who apply for inclusion on any performers list, such database to hold information on language skills, levels of medical competence (including qualifications and appointments), criminal record checks and records of any malpractice, and whether any doctor has been registered by, or had withdrawn his application to, any PCT

The Department will work with national medical organisations to develop a national database and consider what data should be placed on it.

In answer to your question, the need for prompt communication between out-of-hours provider and GP practices is addressed in the National Quality Requirements, published in July 2006.

Specifically, Quality Requirement 2 states that

Providers must send details of all OOH consultations (including appropriate clinical information) to the practice where the patient is registered by 8.00 am the next working day. Where more than one organisation is involved in the provision of OOH services, there must be clearly agreed responsibilities in respect of the transmission of patient data.

Out-of-hours providers must deliver services that meet the National Quality Requirements as a contractual obligation. Providers must regularly audit a random sample of patient contacts and take appropriate action on the results of those audits. Regular reports of these audits will be available to the contracting PCT.

Following publication of the report on GP out-of-hours services by Dr David Colin-Thomé, National Clinical Director for Primary Care at the Department of Health, and Professor Steve Field, Chairman of Council, Royal College of General Practitioners, the Department is now reviewing the National Quality Requirements.

We are also improving out-of-hours and emergency care by ensuring that clinicians can quickly access key information, resulting in safer, more joined-up care. Electronic access to patient summary care records is part of this process. Over 1.3 million summary care records have been created across a number of locations, including London, and early evidence points to improving out-of-hours care, ensuring that doctors have reliable, relevant, up-to-date information at their fingertips in situations where time is critical.

I am copying this letter to those who spoke during the question and placing a copy in the Library.

*Yes*  


**GLENYS THORNTON**

cc: Lord Naseby  
Baroness Masham of Ilton  
Lord Carlile of Berriew  
Lord Patel  
Baroness Barker  
Lord Tomlinson  
Lord Forsyth of Drumlean