

Dear colleagues

You will be aware that South Birmingham PCT has been an early adopter pilot for the Summary Care Record (SCR) upload and that both BEN and HOB PCTs will shortly be writing to all their patients informing them of the rollout of the SCR across Birmingham.

The default position is that patients' records are uploaded to the spine unless they choose to opt out. Although patients can change their minds at any time, and although once uploaded a patient has to be consented again by the clinician seeking access, say at A&E or by OOH services, concerns have been expressed that the very short period which patients are being given to exercise their right to choose is far from ideal and that the procedure for patients to exercise their right to opt out is unnecessarily difficult and bureaucratic. Many patients will have worries which they will wish to have addressed, and many may not bother to read or may ignore the letters and miss their chance to opt out from the start.

Whilst appreciating the potential of SCR to benefit patient care in certain situations, Birmingham LMC has considerable reservations about the opt-out model of consent, which we believe denies fully informed patient choice and which has not been adequately piloted in the early adopter PCTs prior to this very rushed roll-out. Our concerns are shared by many other LMCs, by the GPC and wider BMA, and by the BMA's patient liaison groups. That is why we are writing to you now and attaching a poster/leaflet which you can print out for use in your practices as you see fit. We are also providing you with a patient factsheet and simplified 'opt in-opt out' form to make it easier for your patients to express their choice.

Given that this rollout expects patients to respond within 12 weeks if they wish to opt out of their information being uploaded to the central spine, it may be that practices wish to be more proactive and contact patients directly, or via patient participation groups, or via your practice website and text system if you have them.

Whatever you may feel about the way this has been implemented by the government, and whatever you may feel about its value to patient care, it is our duty as doctors to ensure that our patients are adequately informed about the handling of information we record on their behalf, so that they can make an informed choice.

Regards

Bob Morley

Dr. Robert Morley

Executive Secretary, Birmingham Local Medical Committee