

Code A

31 January 2011

Members' Circular 07/11

Regent's Place
350 Euston Road
London NW1 3JN

Switchboard: 0845 357 8001
Central Fax: 020 7189 5001
Central Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org
www.gmc-uk.org

Dear Member

BBC Face the Facts Broadcast

The GMC is the subject of this week's BBC Radio 4 programme, Face the Facts.

Face the Facts is an investigative documentary presented by John Waite. It usually focuses on failures or negative aspects of public-facing organisations. The BBC's website describes the programme about the GMC as follows:

"Is the General Medical Council the right organisation to regulate the medical profession?"

A new regulator to discipline doctors was due to take over in April, but it's being scrapped by the Coalition. The removal of the adjudication role from the GMC was a key recommendation of the Shipman Inquiry six years ago. Now the medical charity, which registers all 239,000 doctors in the UK, will continue to act as judge and jury when investigating medical complaints. Face the Facts discovers it is not the only key reform recommended by the Shipman Inquiry which has not yet been implemented by the GMC.

Modernisation of the 150-year-old organisation is not coming soon enough for relatives of patients who have died, and doctors whose careers have been ended."

We have been co-operating with the production team from the BBC for the last three weeks, since they informed us they were making the programme, including given them access to an empty hearing room, briefings with key staff, and an interview with Niall Dickson.

The questioning was very challenging and followed interviews and discussions with a number of people who have previously been highly critical of the GMC. These include Peter Walsh of Action against Medical Accidents, representatives of the campaigning group Doctors4Justice, Code C (a doctor who went through our health procedures), and relatives of patients treated by Dr Jane Barton, who was found guilty of serious professional misconduct but only received conditions from the panel, despite the GMC asking for her erasure from the register. They also interviewed GMC Legal Assessor, Andrew Reid, who was the Panel Chair in the Barton case.

Niall gave a robust defence of the organisation, including highlighting the significant progress made in recent years on professionalising our fitness to practise procedures, the reforms of our governance arrangements, the development of our plans for revalidation, Council's proposed reforms of our investigation and adjudication work, and the roll out of employer and regional liaison teams.

The programme will be broadcast on Thursday, 3 February, 12:30-13:00. In preparation, the media team are preparing a series of follow up actions, including press statements, to counter any misleading reporting. We will provide a further update to members following the broadcast.

Please contact me if you would like further information or would like to discuss further.

Yours faithfully

Code C

Ben Jones
Director, Strategy and Communication

Code C