



Helping hand for new Consultants

by Stephen Campion

An increasing number of HCSA Consultants have been asking me whether the Association can provide guidance and advice about starting out in private practice and how best to manage a practice.

In order to see what we could do, I met with Tom Acworth, the CEO of a company called PHF Services Limited, about whose company an article recently appeared in "Hospital Doctor" (November 3rd, Pages 24 & 25). This turned out to be useful meeting as I can share with you what I learnt about the company.

PHF are NOT software providers. They deliver a service called Virtual Practice Management (VPM) which is a complete private practice administrative package, incorporating full diary management, transcription services and financial management. They are coordinating diaries across multiple locations, making appointments, producing transcribed notes and following up with a comprehensive billing and collections service.

The technology that PHF has developed allows access your complete practice on the internet through a secure login area. You can review patient letters and appointments, clinic lists and billing status, online, anytime and from anywhere - as long as you have a standard dial up, or better - broadband, internet access. They have developed these services and systems in consultation with their users - Consultants - and have worked with their medical secretaries to deliver the

required level and functionality of service.

So how much does it cost? PHF is charges for these services on a pay as you go, commission basis, ie., no fixed overheads. This could be very attractive for those just starting out and need to keep a tight rein on cash flow!

Whether specifically interested in these services or not, they are on hand to provide you with some basic "do's and don'ts" of managing a private practice. In any business there is a need to address a certain number of potential pitfalls in accounting, taxation and human resource and data management. In independent practice communications to GP's, insurance companies and potential patients are important and PHF can provide initial marketing ideas and support.

For those with established private practices PHF also provide bad debt collections services - VPM DebtBuster - so if you already have a private secretary but need some help to improve your cash flow and reduce your write offs then PHF could help.

I should stress that the purpose of my meeting with the company was to learn about what it can provide HCSA members. The HCSA has not entered into any commercial arrangement or has any other interest in the Company. But if HCSA members want further information their website is www.phf.uk.com, or call them on 0870 743 4876.

INTRODUCE A MEMBER NOW - AND EARN A GIFT VOUCHER!

Help us to increase membership of the HCSA - and help yourself to a £20 Marks & Spencer gift voucher which we'll send you as our way of saying "thank you". Do it now and you'll be in plenty of time for Christmas!

When you've read this issue (and shared it with colleagues who may not be aware of our services), fill in this form, cut it out and pop it in the post. We will immediately send details and a membership application form to the people you have identified.

When they join, you will receive the £20 voucher from us for EVERY newmember you have introduced.

There's no limit to the number of people you can introduce - or to the quantity of vouchers we can send you.

To:
The Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
Number One, Kingsclere Road
Overton, Nr Basingstoke
Hants RG25 3JA



Please send membership application forms to:

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Introduced by (full name and address)
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HCSA news

Our NHS power base is recognised

The growing power and influence of the HCSA has been recognized by the naming of Chief Executive Stephen Campion in "The Power 50", *Hospital Doctor* magazine's annual list of "the top movers and shakers in health care".

Coming in at No. 31 of the "front-runners for team NHS", Stephen follows the Health Secretary Patricia Hewitt, Chancellor Gordon Brown and Prime Minister Tony Blair. He is placed ahead of BMA Council Chairman James Johnson.

The citation reads:

"As well as maintaining continued scepticism on pensions, Mr Campion has been a vocal critic of independent sector treatment centres, their possible adverse impact on patient care and focus on productivity outcomes.

"More recently, a Department of Health consultation document on the Payment by Results code of conduct, aimed at preventing perverse incentives, received stinging criticism from Mr Campion, who believed it was a travesty that the document should need to be produced".

The magazine paid tribute to the HCSA for "punching above its weight" but highlighted the need to "drive membership to credible levels".

COMMENT: We have long recognized that the way to increased power and influence - however efficient our administrative team may be - is ultimately governed by the size and strength of our membership.

Great strides have been made in recent years with an increase of over a third in our numbers. But we want to do even better - and that's up to you. If each of you introduced just one new member, we would have more than 6,000 in our team and become even more effective in achieving our aims through the NHS corridors of power.

And don't forget: There's an M&S £20 voucher for you every time you introduce a new member!

The HCSA exists as a professional association and Trade Union affiliated to the TUC with one simple objective - to meet the needs of its members. It does this first and foremost by responding to members when they need advice on their contract, terms and conditions of service, job plan or any other issue affecting their employment.

Additionally, as recognized by Hospital Doctor, the HCSA represents members' specific interests in key issues concerning Government and the NHS.

See Back Page.

Overton Office Timetable

Over the Christmas and New Year period the Overton Office will be staffed as follows:-

- Friday December 23rd:**
Open until 12noon
- Monday December 26th Bank Holiday:**
Closed
- Tuesday December 27th Bank Holiday:**
Closed
- Wednesday December 28th:**
Extra Statutory Day Closed
- Thursday December 29th:**
For urgent enquiries phone 01256 771777
- Friday December 30th:**
For urgent enquiries phone 01256 771777
- Monday January 2nd:**
Bank Holiday Closed

PENSIONS : SUCCESS!

Throughout this year, the HCSA has campaigned hard on behalf of its members, and senior hospital medical staff generally, to ensure that there should be no change to the NHS Pension Scheme for those already contributing to their pension, and who are therefore entitled to receive pensions income in accordance with their employment contracts.

HCSA argued throughout the consultation period that a reduction in pensions or extension to the retirement age of 60 would have a damaging effect on morale, and that there would be an exodus of Consultants and senior staff from the NHS.

The HCSA campaign went straight to No 10, and included detailed discussions within the TUC, comprehensive briefings, and consultation within its membership. HCSA therefore welcomes the statement made by Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Trade and Industry that "the pension of existing members will be protected."

While still concerned that proposed changes to pensions for new entrants may create a damaging impact on recruitment, HCSA is pleased that, for the time being at least, a crisis within the NHS has been averted.

"This announcement clearly demonstrates that when the interests of both the NHS and its senior doctors are at risk, we in the HCSA will not sit idly by" said Chief Executive Stephen Champion. "We are pleased that the views of our members have been heard at the highest level" he concluded.

OFFERING HELP FOR RELOCATION

The Chief Executive and his colleagues advise members on the terms & conditions of employment contracts. Whilst job planning and the contract itself are crucial, so too are the domestic questions, particularly for Consultants starting their first Consultant post.

One frequent topic that crops up is relocation, and that covers more than the financial assistance and tax liabilities that arise. The whole process of applying for a post and relocating can be incredibly stressful both for members and their families. Co-incidentally Stephen Champion was recently introduced to Medics on the Move www.medicsonthemove.co.uk. Telephone 0870 350 1858.

In summary the firm based in Bristol will familiarise you with the characteristics of your new home town, undertake property searches if

New boss for advice service

We are delighted to welcome Ian Smith (pictured) as successor to the late John Brawley as Manager of the HCSA Advice Service.

Ian comes with an impressive track record as a senior negotiator with the Transport and Salaried Staff Association, a trade union representing staff members in the transport and travel industries. Ian has over 10 years' experience and success of representing members both individually and collectively.

His role provided individual assistance to members at disciplinary, grievance and negotiating hearings and particularly on matters associated with terms and conditions and employment contracts.

Before joining the TSSA staff Ian worked for British Rail, during which he became local staff representative, regional representative, branch officer, and branch delegate to the TSSA Annual Conference.



His first-hand experience watching the privatisation of the railways may prove especially relevant to today's NHS! The similarities are there to see - within British Rail the resulting fragmentation of the industry into literally hundreds of different companies, all with their own contracts and conditions of service, is not too far removed from the NHS.

Ian enjoys reading, travelling and socialising and regularly plays badminton and squash in an effort to keep fit.

Final words from Ian: "I am very excited by the challenges of my new post at the HCSA and I hope I will soon pick up the unique language of the Health Service Sector. I am very much looking forward to working with you and hope to meet many of you in the near future."

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Planning for 'A' day

Dear Editor,

On behalf of MoneyDoctor Financial Planning, please accept my congratulations for the remarkable success of the HCSA's Pensions campaign. From my travels around numerous NHS Trusts, your campaign appears to have been well received and I am impressed that the Government has listened to your arguments.

I am sure your members are delighted - particularly at the preservation of a retirement age of 60 and pension calculation based on final salary rather than career average. As we all move towards Pensions Simplification next April your members can turn their attention to the more positive aspects of retirement planning afforded by 'A' Day.

But that does not mean that there are no changes looming! Medical, dental and ophthalmic practitioners will shortly receive a leaflet from the Pensions Agency about tax rule changes. Significantly, from April 6th 2006 (A-Day) current tax free limits on pension savings will be limited to £1.5m.

I would be happy to explain further details on this and, as before, I am available to offer independent financial advice to your members if they wish.

Kind regards

Jim Sparrow Director MoneyDoctor Financial Planning Ltd

Tel: 01527 68899 Fax: 01527 68895

Agenda for change

At THE HCSA Council meeting, members were concerned to learn that Medical Secretaries upon whom so much depends for the effective management of Consultants' offices and time are in danger of being "downgraded" as a result of the introduction of Agenda for Change.

HCSA Council fully appreciates the invaluable role Medical Secretaries undertake and therefore felt that if any Consultant wished to support secretaries who may be adversely affected by the implementation of Agenda for Change, they could get advice on how to do this by contacting the British Society of Medical Secretaries as follows:-

Website - www.bsms.org or www.medicalsecretary.org

Email - anna.paton@bsms.org

British Society of Medical Secretaries, c/o Anna Paton, 132 Mayfield Road, Edinburgh, EH9 AD