

More than 218,000 doctors now have a Licence to Practise

16 November 2009

Doctors in the UK are making history today as the biggest change in medical regulation since the first medical register was published 150 years ago is rolled out.

From today in order to practise medicine in the UK, a doctor will have to be registered with the GMC *and* have a licence to practise. 218,153 doctors have a licence to practise in the UK.

Professor Peter Rubin, Chair of the GMC explained:

"The successful start to licensing is a major milestone towards the introduction of revalidation, a new process by which doctors will have to regularly demonstrate to the GMC that they remain up to date and fit to practise in the job they do."

Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson said:

"I welcome the introduction of the licence to practise by the GMC. It is an important prerequisite for the introduction of revalidation, and a clear signal that revalidation is on its way.

"I congratulate the GMC on its successful communication with the profession about this important change, with a 97% response rate from doctors on whether they wish to take a licence or not."

Licensing has implications for patients, doctors and their employers:

Patients

- The law requires that any doctor who treats patients must be registered with a licence to practise.
- Only doctors registered with a licence to practise can write prescriptions or sign death certificates.
- Doctors who hold registration but not a licence are more likely to be working as an academic or outside the UK, for example, but cannot undertake any of the activities for which the law requires them to hold a licence to practise.

Doctors

- A doctor must have a licence in order to legally practise medicine; being registered with the GMC is no longer enough.
- A licence to practise will give a doctor practising in the UK the legal authority to write prescriptions, sign death certificates and exercise a wide range of other legal 'privileges'. This applies to all doctors working in the UK, whether working in the NHS or the independent sector, either on a permanent or locum basis.

Employers

- Employers of doctors must ensure that the doctors they employ have a licence to practise if their work requires them to do so.

If anyone has any queries about the licence to practise they can contact the GMC on licensing@gmc-uk.org or visit <http://www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/licensing/faq/index.asp> for our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

-ENDS-

For further information please contact the Media Relations Office on 020 7189 5454, out of hours 020 7189 5444, fax 020 7189 5401, email press@gmc-uk.org, website <http://www.gmc-uk.org>.

Notes to Editors:

1. The use of the title 'doctor' is not protected in law to those who hold a medical qualification. The title can be used by any doctor included those who have retired or who are no longer practising. A doctor can sign passport photographs regardless of whether they hold registration.
2. It is illegal for anyone to present themselves as a registered medical practitioner, either with or without a licence, if this is not the case.
3. Anyone can check a doctors' registration status on the GMC's newly relaunched website www.gmc-uk.org and searching on the List of Registered Medical Practitioners (LRMP).
4. A doctor's GMC reference number is issued when they first register with the GMC. This will not change if they hold a licence; and they will not be issued with any other number in respect of the licence to practise. The reference number is a unique identifier which enables anyone to confirm a doctor's GMC status via the online Register or by telephoning the GMC.
5. *Total number of doctors holding registration with a licence by UK country*

Country	Number of doctors
England	167,173
Northern Ireland	6,111

Scotland	18,867
Wales	10,087

6. *Total number of doctors holding registration with a licence in major cities and towns in England*

Area	Number of doctors
London	37,043
Birmingham	7,121
Manchester	4,563
Bristol	3,454
Liverpool	3,233
Sheffield	4,658
Leeds	3,805
Nottingham	3,550
Leicester	3,340
Southampton	2,876
Brighton	2,370
Bath	1,170

The General Medical Council registers and licences doctors to practise medicine in the UK. Our purpose is summed up in the phrase: *Regulating doctors, Ensuring Good Medical Practice.*

The law gives us four main functions:

- keeping up-to-date registers of qualified doctors
- fostering good medical practice
- promoting high standards of medical education
- dealing firmly and fairly with doctors whose fitness to practise is in doubt

