

13 July 2000

AK/SR40

To: chief executives, NHS Executive in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland; regional chairs and directors, NHS; chairs of CHCs; local health councils and health and social services councils; and chief executives and directors of public health authorities, health boards, health and social services boards, chief executives and medical directors of NHS trust and independent hospitals.

Dear Colleague

I wrote in May 2000 to update you on changes within the GMC. This week there has been another significant Council meeting and it is important to ensure that you are aware of the further developments taking place.

Medical Act 1983 (Amendment) Order 2000

Both Houses of Parliament have now approved the legislation we sought, to widen our powers. The Privy Council approved our new rules on 12 July 2000. The effects will be:

- To provide us with greater powers of interim suspension, and interim conditions on registration, exercised by a new Interim Orders Committee, on which there will be very strong lay representation.
- To increase the minimum length of time before a doctor can seek restoration to the register. It was 10 months, it is now 5 years.
- To place a duty on the GMC, where we take action under our fitness to practise procedures, to notify the Secretary of State, the doctor's employer (or health authority) and others with responsibility for the doctor; to give the GMC discretionary powers to disclose information in the public interest about a doctor's fitness to practise to any person (for example, the police); and to give the GMC powers to require information from other bodies for the purpose of our fitness to practise procedures.
- To enable us to take action on criminal convictions which happen abroad (if the offence would be an offence in this country).