Written Answers and Statements

Sarah Wollaston (Totnes, Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps he is taking to ensure that obese and overweight patients receive expert advice on weight loss and weight management as early as possible.

Anna Soubry (Broxtowe, Conservative)

The Government has published "Healthy Lives, Healthy People: A call to action on obesity in England" which sets out our approach to tackling obesity in the new public health and NHS systems. The 'Call to action' sets out the importance of both preventing and helping people who are already overweight manage their weight. General practitioners, along with other clinicians, can play a key role in 'making every contact count' by raising the issue of obesity and providing advice or referral to appropriate services.

Primary care trusts are responsible for commissioning health care services to meet the needs of their population including services for those who are concerned about their weight. Health care professionals are encouraged to implement guidance from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) on the "Prevention, identification, assessment and management of overweight and obesity in adults and children" and, where appropriate, implement their local obesity care pathway to ensure that patients receive the support they need to manage their weight.

The NICE guidance is available at:

www.nice.org.uk/CG43

Dr Wollaston (Totnes Conservative)

To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of the data on achievement, exceptions and prevalence for the Quality and Outcomes Framework published by the Health and Social Care Information Centre on the number of people registered as obese; and if he will make a statement. [138230]

Dr Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich, Conservative)

Practices continue to maintain high levels of achievement against the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) in England achieving 96.9% of the points available, compared to 94.7% in the previous year. The main reason for the small increase in average points achievement is technical, due to a change in the allocation of points between QOF areas.
Achievement on obesity is the same as the previous year at 100%. The indicator rewards general practitioners (GPs) for keeping a register of patients aged 16 years and over with a body mass index greater than or equal to 30 in the preceding 15 months. GPs cannot except patients from the obesity register. The percentage of patients included in the register is slightly higher than the previous year (10.7% compared to 10.5%). However, the indicator only captures patients whose body mass index has been recorded as part of routine care during the past year and so does not record true prevalence in the population.

The QOF has brought improvements in patient care, but we need to go further and faster. This is why we have sent proposals to the British Medical Association for changes to the GP contract to drive up standards for all patients. We want the contract to reflect the most up-to-date expert guidance and excellent standards of care.

Under our proposals, the indicator on obesity will form part of the Public Health Domain in QOF from April 2013. Public Health England will set priorities for development of public health indicators for QOF. We are committed to identifying the best possible evidence of what works in tackling obesity and pulling together the evidence will be a key task for Public Health England.

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