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**FIPO**

federation of independent  
practitioner organisations

Dear Colleague,

5th November 2006

**Re: Specialist Tendering in Ophthalmology.**

Many consultants have been in touch with FIPO and other professional associations for advice on how to handle the current difficult problems with BUPA and PPP. As you know, when BUPA first floated its plan for an approved ophthalmology network at a national level the advice from all the professional organisations was clear and unequivocal.

There were many objections to this plan because it would have restricted patient choice and disrupted patients' continuity of care, as not all consultants would be recognised. It would break the vitally important direct clinical and contractual relationship between consultant and patient. There were also anxieties about the amount of detailed information that BUPA, an insurer, was requiring from consultants in terms of clinical outcomes and audits. These arguments were generally well accepted by the profession and the BUPA initiative seemed stalled at a national level. The profession did agree with BUPA Insurance that there should be a mechanism for looking at ways in which cost efficiencies could be made but were unanimous in their view that such initiatives should be outside of this restrictive network.

Since then BUPA has moved again to impose this type of preferred provider network at local level and PPP has acted similarly but without any of the publicity and quality frills associated with the BUPA attempt.

The advice to consultants must remain the same and every consultant should consider his/her position in this regard. You should note that joining a preferred provider network would inevitably impact on consultant independence and choice for the patient. Almost 1,000 of your consultant colleagues in orthopaedics and ENT have returned a detailed questionnaire, the results of which will be posted very shortly on the FIPO website and are also being sent out now more widely. This shows very clearly their opposition to this type of managed care encroachment by BUPA and PPP. They are thus fully behind their ophthalmic and anaesthetic colleagues.

We recognise the fears that consultants may have but the general advice remains that you should not sign up to these plans and thus risk losing your independence. This view is supported by the ophthalmic and anaesthetic associations.



Geoffrey Glazer  
Chairman of FIPO