

Duncan Nichol, CBE
Chief Executive

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NHS Management
Executive

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To: Regional General Managers
District General Managers
FHSA General Managers
SHA General Managers
Unit General Managers
NHS Trust Chief Executives

Department of Health
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS
Telephone 071-210 3000
Fax 071-210 5409

EL(91)128
30 October 1991

Dear Colleagues,

Patient's Charter

1. I am writing to seek your help in implementing the Patient's Charter. I enclose copies of the Charter, together with a short guide to it which will shortly be sent to all households in England. The Charter and the guide are also being sent direct to general practitioners, dentists, opticians and to Community Health Councils.

2. You and the staff of the NHS have already achieved a great deal in a short time in introducing the NHS reforms. We now wish to build on this. The 'Health of the Nation' and the Patient's Charter put further emphasis on the key purposes of the NHS, the one concerned with improving the health of the population, the other on ensuring continuous improvements in the services we provide to individual patients.

3. The Patient's Charter builds on the ideas and principles in the Citizen's Charter. It sets out the rights which the citizen has in relation to the NHS and introduces national standards of service. I also expect health authorities to set and publicise local standards.

4. The Patient's Charter aims to bring about a change of emphasis in the NHS, so that it becomes more responsive to patients' needs and the views they express about the type of service they want. It builds on the excellent work which is already taking place in many parts of the country with the intention of bringing everybody up to the standards of the best. Many authorities or units already have their own patients' charters and set local standards of service and I am sure they will wish to continue doing this. The production of the Patient's Charter is not the end of a process: we want to develop the standards in the Charter and will be looking to the NHS to come forward with proposals, perhaps based on what they have achieved locally.

5. I am looking to you to help me with implementation. The key now is to ensure that staff at all levels are aware of the contents of the Charter. It is as important for everybody in the NHS to understand the principles behind the Charter and its key aim of improving services to patients, as it is to know in detail the specific Rights and Standards listed. I believe that, generally, staff will recognise the Rights and Standards as being those which they are already trying to deliver. Implementation of the Charter and the extension and development of the standards contained in it can only be achieved if staff are committed to the Charter and feel that it belongs to the NHS. I am therefore looking to all health authority managers to work with and involve their staff - perhaps through meetings or personal letters - to ensure that the principles in the Charter become fully embedded in the NHS. I have asked RGMS to coordinate and lead this process.

6. The Rights and Standards in the Charter apply equally to the services provided by NHS Trusts and I will therefore be expecting Trust Chief Executives both to ensure implementation of the Charter and dissemination of the principles contained in it.

7. The timetable for implementing the Rights and Standards in the Charter from April 1992 is challenging. The Management Executive will issue specific guidance within the next few weeks to help you. This will cover, for example, implementation of the waiting time guarantee scheme, and the way in which we expect health authorities to make available information about the services provided. We will be discussing the collection and publication of information on Standards with representatives from the NHS and will also issue guidance on this as soon as possible.

8. You will see from the enclosed separate order form that, in due course, ethnic language versions of the Charter will also be available.

9. If you would like to order further copies of any of the publications, please complete and return the enclosed order form. Any requirements for the ethnic language versions will be recorded and sent later, as soon as they become available, but orders for the English language Charter or the guide will be processed and fulfilled at once.

10. Any queries on the *content* of the Patient's Charter should be addressed to John Richardson, Ground Floor, Richmond House, London SW1A 2NS, tel:071-210 5029.

Yours sincerely,

GRO-C

Duncan Nichol
Chief Executive

This letter will be cancelled on 30 October 1992.