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Posted on Monday 21st October 2013

First medical practice in Cumbria to win top award

Doctors and staff at the Norwood Medical Centre at Barrow-in-Furness are celebrating as they become the first general practice in Cumbria, and only the fourth in the whole of the UK, to be awarded the highly prestigious Royal College of General Practitioners Practice Accreditation (RCGP).

The RCGP Practice Accreditation award is a thoroughly tested framework that enables practice teams to improve the quality of care for their patients. Staff at the Norwood Medical Practice began their journey towards accreditation in January 2012 and carried out a number of reviews to help them reach their goal over a period of 16 months.

One of the reviews looked at the care offered to the most vulnerable such as blind, deaf, frail and elderly patients as well as those suffering mental health illness and patients with learning difficulties.

Patients and outside agencies where appropriate, were included as part of the review so that services could be improved for everyone. Various practical initiatives have now been put in place to support all these groups when they need to access the surgery. As an example, all written information is now in a format suitable for the visually impaired and staff receive regular training on all these areas to improve the quality of care for patients.

The medical practice now has 'quality improvement' meetings every three months for all staff and issues covered include patient suggestions and complaints.

Practice Manager, Caroline Lee, said: "We have worked really hard to achieve the RCGP Practice Accreditation and it has been a really good team effort with all staff being involved. It has been an extremely useful exercise that has led to many improvements in the practice. One of the most important things about participating in the programme is making sure that the change is embedded so that it leads to continual improvement rather than being a one-off tick box exercise. I think we have succeeded and I would like to thank patients and staff for all their hard work in achieving this highly recognised award."

GP Practices within Furness are supported by the NHS Cumbria Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) Furness locality team. The Cumbria CCG is further supporting the locality by giving other practices the opportunity to complete the award as part of the Local Improvement Scheme for 2013/14.

Practice Accreditation is a quality standard aimed and tailored specifically for General Practice. The straightforward process is designed to be manageable for practices of all sizes and practices that decide to go for accreditation will start to see immediate benefits as they progress.

The standards reflect key aspects of primary care, particularly the organisational systems and processes that ensure delivery of safe and quality care, facilitate on-going team development and recognise the contribution to quality improvement that can be made by the whole practice team.

The Practice Accreditation standards have been developed in partnership with the University of Manchester and in collaboration with the General Medical Council, Royal College of Nursing, Care Quality Commission, Department of Health, NHS Confederation Primary Care Trusts and Patient Groups.

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