

BMA: Accusations of general practice being closed ‘extremely damaging’ to practice managers

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The false narrative that general practice is not open to patients is ‘extremely damaging’ at a time when practice managers, GPs and their teams are ‘reaching breaking point’, the BMA has said.

GP committee chair Dr Richard Vautrey made the comments in response to the latest GP data, which shows 14.7 million appointments were delivered by GPs in March – 4.8 million more than in February.

Dr Vautrey said the figures, published yesterday (29 April), ‘categorically’ prove wrong the accusations that GPs are not seeing patients and instead underline the ‘intense workload pressures’ staff are facing.

‘Today’s figures underline the immense efforts that practices are going to providing care to their communities and the intense workload pressures that staff are under as we continue to respond to the pandemic alongside patients’ wider health needs,’ he said.

He added that GP and their teams are ‘consistently’ reporting being busier than ever before and it is therefore ‘heartbreaking and completely demoralising’ to hear accusations that practices are closed.

‘This narrative, categorically proven wrong by today’s data, is extremely damaging at a time when morale is already reaching rock bottom and many GPs, practice managers and others in the practice workforce are reaching breaking point,’ Dr Vautrey said.

Record-breaking month for consultations

The NHS Digital dataset recorded [28.4 million appointments across general practice in March](#), with 52% of these (14.7 million) carried out by GPs.

While the 14.7 million GP appointments delivered do include some Covid-19 vaccinations, the number remains higher than for March 2020 (12.8 million) and March 2019 (13.6 million).

NHS Digital said it estimated that around 1.24 million of the appointments recorded for March 2021 were [Covid vaccine](#) related.

The dataset also revealed that 40% (11.3 million) of appointments in March took place over the phone, while 56% (15.8 million) were face-to-face.

Professor Martin Marshall, chair of the Royal College of GPs (RCGP), said the data shows the 'massive pressure' placed on GPs and their teams every day.

He said: 'GPs and their teams are reporting working harder than ever at the moment, and these figures from NHS Digital back this up. The figures show the massive pressure under which general practice is working and points to the challenges that GPs face every day to provide the care that patients want and need.'

However, he added that the figures do not account for the 'incredible work' that has gone into the Covid vaccination programme, or the 'significant increase in clinical admin work' that the college's own data shows.