

LETTERS

GP CONTROL OF OUT OF HOURS CARE

Bring back local GPs for urgent and out of hours care

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Any willingness among GPs to reclaim urgent and out of hours care would be greeted with joy in English emergency departments, which are currently struggling with the twin demands of rising attendances and an acknowledged crisis in the medical workforce.^{1 2} Despite numerous and varied initiatives, emergency department attendances continue to rise, with the biggest jump coinciding with the point at which GPs could relinquish out-of-hours responsibility entirely (April 2004; figure↓).

The important development in Hackney,² where patients seeking a GP will once again be seen by “doctors they know,” provides a natural experiment that must be carefully studied to assess its

impact across the emergency care system. It may prove to be the most cost effective intervention we have in the ongoing struggle to control spiralling hospital demand.

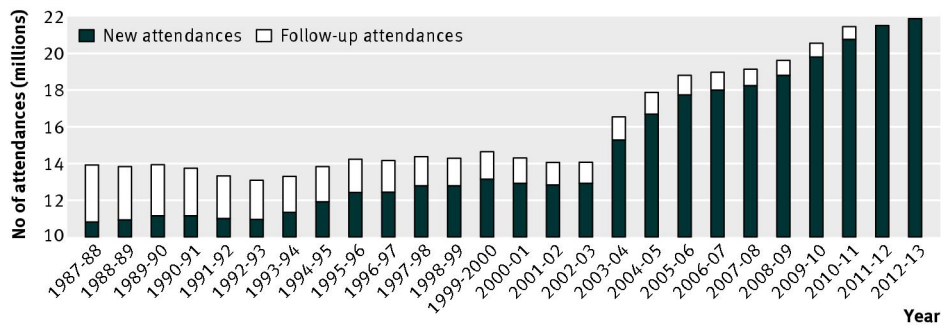
Competing interests: None declared.

- 1 Kmietowicz Z. Hackney GPs plan to take control of out of hours care from April. *BMJ* 2013;346:f309. (16 January.)
- 2 White C. Taskforce seeks to tackle “crisis” in emergency medicine recruitment. *BMJ Careers* 2012. <http://careers.bmj.com/careers/advice/view-article.html?id=20008702>.

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Figure



Numbers of attendances at emergency departments in England, 1987-2013