

Dealing with information and publicity requests from external organisations

Part 1

Circulation of information to the GP educational network

Introduction

Over the past few years, there have been an increasing number of requests from external and commercial organisations to share information with GP trainees, trainers and Programme Directors.

To date, there has been a mixed approach to addressing this issue, with some content being forwarded through a monthly update e-mail, and other information being posted in several sub-areas of the deanery intra and internet.

Occasionally the deanery has acted as an intermediary and sent out mailings on behalf of external bodies.

Challenge

This approach is no longer sustainable for the following reasons;

Educator networks have little control over how they receive content, and may not be aware of where else on the deanery website to seek it.

The deanery leaves itself potentially vulnerable to accusations of favouritism towards some external course providers or commercial organisations, if it is seen to forward or upload content from some and reject it from others. In addition, we need to consider the message (of apparent endorsement) given by displaying other organisations' content on our publicly accessible deanery web areas.

Whilst some information from external organisations and providers may be of great interest to subsets of our educator network, the fragmentation of such content across several sub-sites makes administration and access of it less efficient.

In particular, we have an obligation to both our educator and trainee networks not to bombard them by email or other means with information which might be of interest to a very small minority. This particularly relates to trainees with whom we have already contracted to only send them information related to their training and obtaining their CCT.

Guidance

To tackle these issues and provide consistency, the following guidance is recommended:

- The GP department will NOT use its database to routinely transmit information received from external organisations relating to courses and conferences directly to our educator network or our trainee network

- In exceptional circumstances, where there is an external communication of paramount importance, such information can be circulated only after the written approval by a Director or Deputy Director of General Practice Education
- The GP department will de-commission its monthly mail shot to the GP educational network henceforth (July 2010)
- Content relating to external courses or commercial providers will in future be uploaded to the GP Resources site (until a similar facility exists within the Synapse system) where it is made clear that such information, in spite of being listed for convenience, is not approved by the deanery. Placed here it can address the following;
 - Content will not be in deanery's public domain
 - Access (password protected) will be at the choosing of the educator network
 - Content centralised to one area
 - Will reduce deanery admin time needed as it allows providers to update their content securely and directly (as this will be outside the main deanery website's firewall)
- Members of the GP department are to direct all such requests to the Deanery Informatics Unit (irfana.saeed@londondeanery.ac.uk) who will redirect as appropriate, whilst other admin leads build up their knowledge of how the site works.

Part 2

Information requests from within the deanery and from external bodies

Over the past year there has been increasing communication from a variety of bodies/individuals ([both within the deanery and external*](#)) requesting data held in the GP database over and above the "normal" requests made by the deanery's business partners and governmental organisations.

We propose that ad hoc requests from individuals (normally trainees or their supervisors), [internal departments within the deanery*](#), commercial organisations or non for profit organisations not connected with the normal work of the deanery will not be processed except for those which are clearly and unambiguously those which fall into the category of a Freedom of Information request either explicitly or implicitly.

Notwithstanding the above should a Director or Deputy Director decide that a request should be fulfilled this will be done.

In all cases data protection with respect to individuals will take precedence over requests for data from third parties and so even if a request is sanctioned by a Director, it will not be fulfilled if it is clear that it would breach an individual's data protection rights.

* In the interim period until Synapse is fully functional (up to 1 year) from August 2010, we will continue to service internal requests in all cases except those which appear to be very clearly against the spirit of the Data Protection Act. Where this occurs, we will refer to a Director or Deputy Director within the GP department for a decision.

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