General Practice:
A Manifesto for Patient Care in Scotland
At £28-35 per consultation, general practice is exceptionally good value
General practitioners provide personalised care and advocacy for families and individuals from a unique position at the heart of their communities. With most patients seeing their GP 4 times a year on average at a cost of about £28-35 per consultation, general practice is exceptionally good value.

Our health service in Scotland is facing a number of huge challenges which include an aging population, rapidly developing technology and a changing workforce profile. We also face unprecedented financial pressures alongside major structural changes to the NHS in England; while this is a cause for concern we are committed to helping improve the NHS by exploring the best way ahead for Scotland.

As the largest medical royal college we aim to help ensure that the Scottish general practice of the future is fit to face these challenges. We would like more time with patients, a genuine shift to providing more care in the community, better communication between GPs and hospitals, and equal care for all. GPs are experts in managing risk and living with uncertainty in a way that is different from other areas of healthcare. GPs are natural leaders and innovators in their practices; these skills could be used more widely within the NHS in Scotland.

We are ideally placed to help provide practical solutions in partnership with patients, Scottish Government, our fellow health organisations, third sector organisations and the public.”

John Gillies
RCGP Scotland Chair
RCGP Scotland calls for:

High quality GP care for all

- GPs to have more time with their patients
  
  Our population is getting older. As a consequence, more patients will have several long-term and complex conditions. The average consultation time should be increased to enable greater discussion about care and treatment. This will require more doctors and nurses.

  In areas of severe deprivation, longer consultations are needed to address the higher proportion of complex conditions caused by higher levels of alcohol and drug misuse, obesity and illnesses caused by smoking.

- Greater efficiency between all health services
  
  Communication between general practice, hospitals and specialists needs to be faster and more efficient. There must be better teamwork and collaboration between general practice, hospitals, the ambulance service and social care to make the best use of scarce resources.

- Action to improve end of life care
  
  Scotland needs consistent, high quality care for patients at the end of their life. With an aging population this will be an increasingly important issue. We call for a commitment from the Scottish Government to provide further resources and to fully support the implementation of best practice.

- Five year training for GPs
  
  GPs have an increasingly complex job; however we still have the shortest training period of any medical speciality. As the GP role grows so the length of training must be increased to ensure all patients receive the high quality care they deserve. Training should be increased to 5 years, with greater emphasis on leadership training.
RCGP Scotland calls for:

Improving the health of the nation

- **Equal care for all**
  Scotland has very significant inequalities in health; from blanket inner city deprivation to hidden deprivation in remote and rural practice. As a part of the local community, GPs can play a central role in addressing these issues.

  We call for a commitment from the Scottish Government to prioritise tackling this issue with fellow health and third sector organisations and a pledge that the work will be fully funded.

- **Further action to tackle smoking, obesity and drug misuse**
  We want to work in partnership with the Scottish Government and our peers to tackle high smoking rates, the obesity epidemic and the tragedy of drug misuse. We support the existing initiatives on smoking cessation, healthy eating and increased physical activity. This should begin with education and guidance in childhood, and include measures on food and tobacco advertising.

  RCGP Scotland will continue to deliver training for GPs, pharmacists and nurses in drug misuse.

- **A minimum price per unit of alcohol**
  With 111,000 GP consultations in 2007-08 due to alcohol related illness or injury, Scotland needs further action to prevent the harmful effects of alcohol misuse. A minimum price per unit has been shown to reduce the sale and consumption of cheap alcohol in harmful quantities.

- **Investment in training and development**
  Sustained investment is required in GP education, training, practice premises and information technology in order to deliver high quality care for the patients of the future.
RCGP Scotland calls for:

Care for patients closer to home

• More health care provided in the community
  More health care should be provided in the community, including community hospitals, rather than in larger hospitals. This will need targeted nursing and community care resources to meet the complex needs of an aging population.

• Better access and information for patients
  A comprehensive range of information services easily accessible to patients is needed. Patients need to know what services are available locally and which healthcare professional can help them. We must work with patients to raise awareness and provide patient information that is relevant to where they live.

• Better partnership with patients
  Health care works best when patients are closely involved in deciding how to maintain and improve their health. Aims and outcomes should be jointly developed by patients and their GPs.

• Promotion of patient groups
  There should be greater recognition of the value of patient engagement, including the work of patient groups, in helping individual practices to provide the care their community needs. Practices must be actively encouraged to develop patient groups in their practices to improve communication and understanding of patient needs.
"We are ideally placed to help provide practical solutions"