



Cleveland Local Medical Committee

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LETTERS/STD/CERTIFICATION-STUDENTS

Date:.....

To: Schools and Colleges in Cleveland and surrounding areas

Dear Sir / Madam,

Requests for Short-Term Medical Certification – Pupils / Students

For many years Cleveland LMC has maintained a policy on short-term medical certification which was widely circulated among GPs. Our policy has not changed, and is that GPs should not issue certificates for periods of sickness which do not require the issuing of a medical certificate under the Social Security arrangements.

Since the advent of self-certification for statutory sick pay purposes in 1983, GPs have not been obliged to issue certificates for periods of sickness of 7 days or less. A GP is entitled to charge a patient whatever they deem appropriate for a short term certificate. However, NHS GPs do not relish the prospect of charging patients, especially where the provision of such a certificate is a requirement of the patient's school or college. Moreover, with the increasing number of commitments of GPs, they have no wish to waste valuable surgery time seeing patients suffering from minor, self-limiting illnesses, or those capable of self-treatment, only to be asked to provide a sick note. This policy is in accord with reports from the Government encouraging greater use of occupational health services.

Your student has asked for a short term medical certificate and the doctor has, quite reasonably, declined to issue this to his patient. The LMC's position on this question is quite clear. It is not part of a GP's job to police students' attendance at school or college. If schools or colleges require medical advice, arrangements exist in the maintained sector through the local school medical service; those in the independent sector should have their own arrangements. Leaving it to students to trouble their GP for these purposes during normal surgery hours is a waste of NHS time and resources, and is a practice which we accordingly disparage.

We regret if this policy causes inconvenience to you, but feel that the proper channels should be used rather than making inappropriate use of the General Practitioner service.

Yours faithfully

Dr J T Canning
Secretary