

'You can't have a flash car and big house on £30K — there's only so much money'
Dr John Wotherspoon on NHS rationing

BMA members want a vote for all

A Pulse survey this week reveals 70% of BMA members believe its leadership election procedure should be ripped up to allow one member one vote.

With the 34-strong BMA council set to vote on a new chair in two weeks' time, a further 56% say the lack of democracy within the organisation will leave whoever takes charge with 'a lack of legitimacy'.

The survey, carried out on behalf of Pulse by doctors' mobile communications firm Pearl Medical, reveals the views of more than 700 GPs on the main issues facing the BMA.

Nearly 90% of those who took part believe the BMA needs to do more to stand up to the Government, and 59% think confronting Government spin is



Dr Alan Cohen: democracy works for the country and would for us

should be its top priority.

The survey reveals the full extent of anger among BMA grassroots members and adds an extra twist to the battle to become chair, after the resignation of Mr James Johnson last month

over his handling of the MTAS crisis.

The contest had looked like a two-horse race between GPC chair Dr Hamish Meldrum and BMA deputy chair Dr Sam Everington, with our survey showing the pair neck and neck in terms of popularity among GPs.

However, Dr Tony Calland, a retired GP from Wye Valley and chair of the BMA medical ethics committee and its Welsh council, also threw his hat in the ring this week (see story below).

But with the BMA's annual representative meeting in Torquay looming (25-28 June), the grassroots rebellion casts doubt over how long the successful election candidate will serve.

BMA council member Dr

Kaillish Chand, a GP in Ashton under Lyne in Lancashire, told Pulse last week that he was planning to put forward a motion at the ARM calling for the vote to be widened to all BMA members and for whoever wins the election to serve only a year, instead of three before facing a new election under a new constitution.

Dr Chand said the survey backed his view that the BMA needed a radical shake-up.

'The medical profession is being undermined by the Government and in my view the BMA is not taking effective action because of weak leadership,' he claimed. 'This can only be addressed if the leader has the backing of all members.'

Dr Alan Cohen, a GP in south

London and BMA member, said: 'I would like to have a vote. Members can be disenfranchised and disinterested when, as now, their vote is lost through the bureaucratic system. If democracy works for our country (mostly), democracy would work for our profession, too.'

Dr John Ashcroft, a GP in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, and BMA member, agreed: 'The BMA could do more. The obvious thing is pay, and the junior doctors thing. We have to build bridges with the Government.'

Dr Richard Vautrey, a GP in Leeds and GPC negotiator, said: 'The Conservatives went one member one vote and they ended up with Iain Duncan Smith. Our priority now is to elect a new chair, not review procedures.'

What GPs want from the BMA

70%

say voting system should be open to all members

56%

say lack of a vote means new chair will lack legitimacy

89%

say the BMA needs to do more to stand up to Government

59%

say tackling Government spin is the top priority

66%

say having a GP (or former GP) as chair of the BMA is important

Source: Survey for Pulse by Pearl Medical

New candidate at the eleventh hour

Dr Tony Calland this week became a last-minute contender in the battle to be the next BMA chair.

The deadline for nominations ran out on Tuesday and

chair of the Welsh council for the BMA and current chair of the BMA medical ethics committee. He has worked as a GP in the Wye Valley in Wales for most of his medical career since



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